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BRITAIN'S TURNING POINT EL ALAMEIN

INSIDE THE ARMoured SHOWDOWN MONTY VS ROMMEL TACTICS OF THE DESERT RAT TRIUMPH

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MEDIEVAL GUERRILLA FIGHTER



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Welcome

“Our mandate from the Prime Minister is to destroy the Axis forces in North Africa... It can be done, and it will be done”

– Field-Marshal Bernard Montgomery

After the war, Churchill would reflect that “Before Alamein we never had a victory – after Alamein we never had a defeat.” Though this is debatable, what’s certain is that 1942’s showdown in the North African desert was a key turning point – and not just for Britain.

The Second Battle of El Alamein was a multi-national clash. Joining the British and Germans were Free-French, New Zealander, Australian, Indian, South African, Italian and other forces lined up on either side.

It was also a major turning point for an abrasive, but undeniably gifted general: one Bernard

Montgomery. After drawing a line in the sand and achieving great victory, he would go on to take an even greater part in the war.



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Editor



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TOM GARNER

This month Tom has had nightmares of wandering through an endless desert, and being chased by a huge, red dragon. Clearly he’s been working too hard on his features: El Alamein and the Welsh Braveheart! (pages 28 and 40).



DAVID SMITH

David has settled into his comfort zone this issue, tackling the American War of Independence for the Frontline section (page 14). He also takes you for a tour of Oflag IV-C – Colditz – and the stories of the men who cracked it (page 48).



MIGUEL MIRANDA

Never one to shy away from dissecting the murky roots of a modern conflict, Miguel has turned to Yemen for this issue’s Briefing. He looks at how this often overlooked yet chaotic state has shaped events in the history of the Middle East (page 68).

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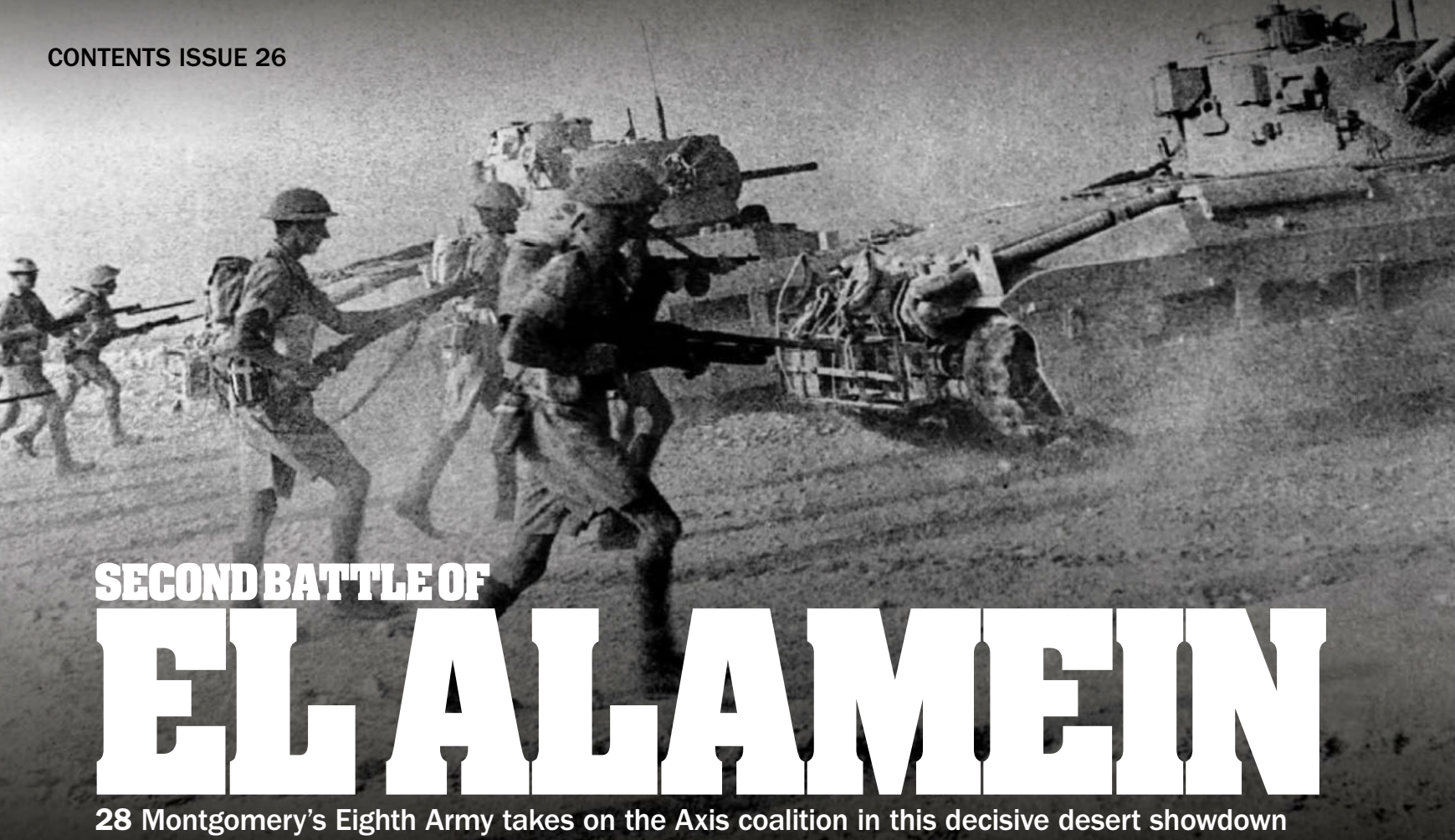


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A bit of dark humour on a sign put up on El Alamein road by Australian troops



SECOND BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN

28 Montgomery's Eighth Army takes on the Axis coalition in this decisive desert showdown

Frontline

14 **War of Independence**

From the 'shot heard around the world' to the final surrender at Yorktown

16 **War on the continents**

Learn how America's colonial rebellion spread into a global conflict

18 **Generals on the frontline**

The genius, and often not so genius, tacticians who campaigned during the Revolution

20 **Was British strategy doomed?**

With among the world's most professional armies, Britain could have easily stolen victory

22 **In the ranks of the Revolution**

Soldiers of all varieties, abilities, and nationalities, took to American battlefields

24 **Head to head**

How did the regular British redcoat match up against his continental opponent?

26 **Battle of Long Island**

A blow-by-blow account of the American retreat in the face of overwhelming opposition

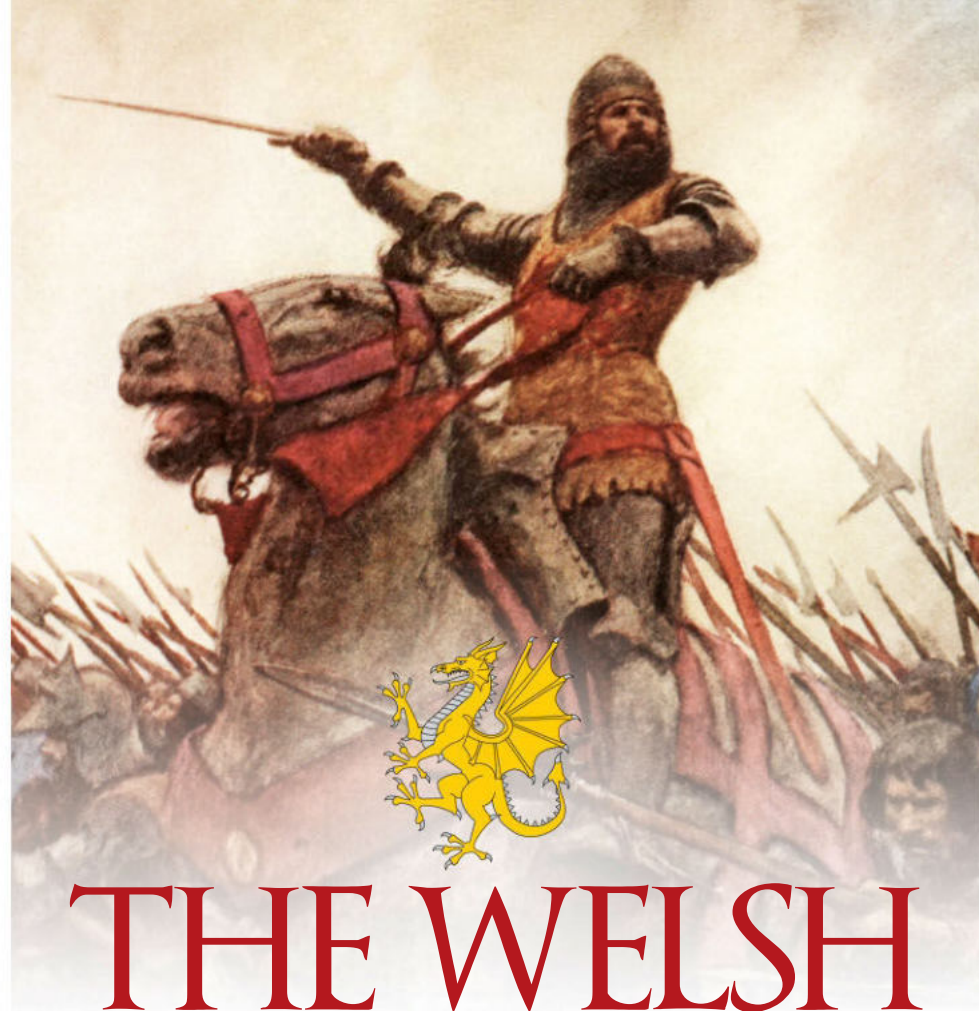
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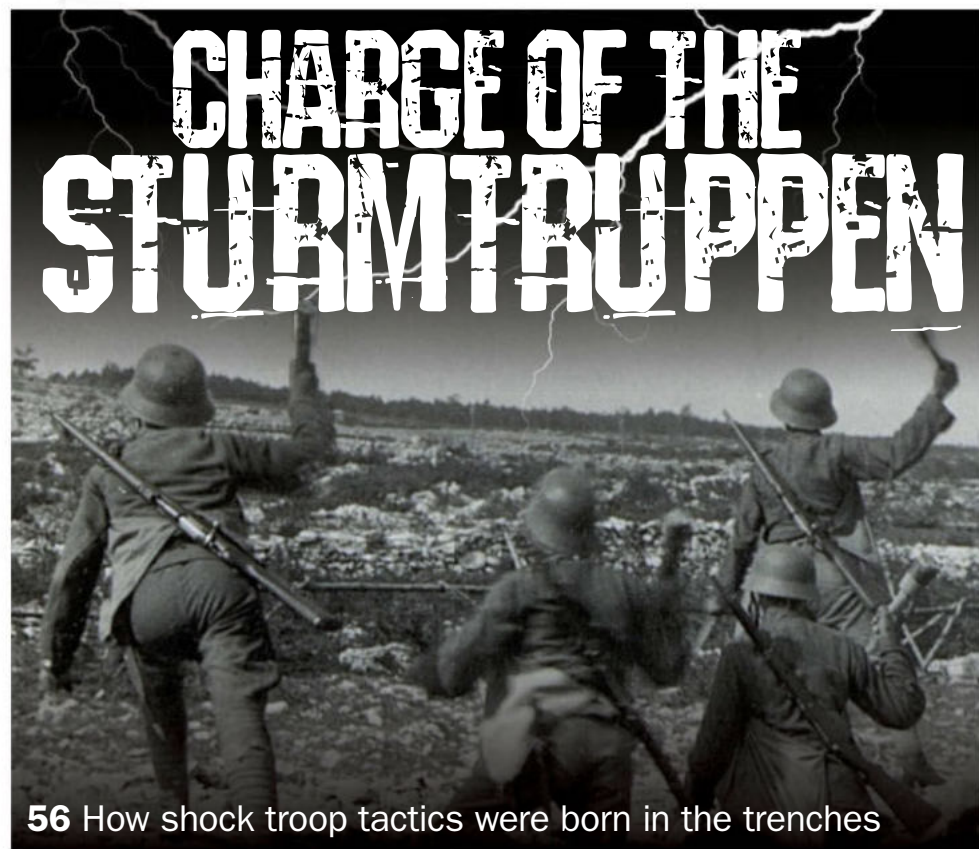
BLOODBATH IN YEMEN

68 Explore the origins of this chaotic conflict



THE WELSH BRAVEHEART

40 Follow the story of Wales's Medieval guerilla warrior



56 How shock troop tactics were born in the trenches

06 WAR IN FOCUS

Stunning imagery from throughout history

28 GREAT BATTLES **El Alamein**

Inside the armoured showdown that would decide the course of WWII

40 The Welsh Braveheart

Follow Owen Glendower's guerilla war against the English crown

48 Escape from Colditz

How were plucky Allied POWs able to escape from Oflag IV-C?

56 Charge of the Sturmtruppen

How the elite shock troops were born

68 THE BRIEFING **Bloodbath in Yemen**

Among the poorest countries in the Middle East is also the most ravaged by warfare

76 OPERATOR'S HANDBOOK **Handley Page Halifax**

This unsung heavy bomber was just as vital as its famous cousin the Lancaster

82 Pirate wars of the ancient world

From the nomad invaders of Egypt, to the Vandal hordes that sacked Rome

88 VICTORIA CROSS HERO **Charles Davis Lucas**

Follow the forgotten story behind the first ever citation for the Victoria Cross

92 Book reviews

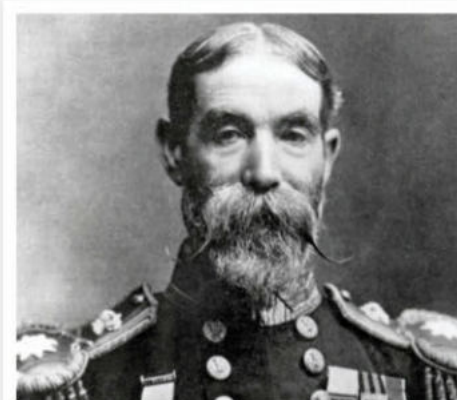
A selection of the latest military titles waiting for you on the shelves

98 ARTEFACT OF WAR **Miltiades's helmet**

The artefact worn by the famous Greek general at the Battle of Marathon

THE FIRST VC

88 The story behind the earliest Victoria Cross



WARⁱⁿ FOCUS

“TO THE GERMAN PEOPLE”

Taken: July 1945 & March 2015

This digital composite of the Reichstag was created to mark the 70th anniversary of victory over Nazi Germany and the end of the war in Europe. Taken just months after the devastating Battle for Berlin, the 1945 element of the photo shows the extent of the damage done to the Reichstag, which was overrun by the Red Army on 2 May 1945.









WAR_{in} **FOCUS**

KNOWING MIG, KNOWING YOU

*Taken: **August 1989***

Two Soviet MiG-29s are intercepted by USAF F-15 Eagles, while en route to a Canadian air show. Based at Elmendorf base, in Alaska, the 21st Tactical Fighter Wing was still on high alert at the end of the Cold War, closely guarding North American airspace from any Soviet incursions. The

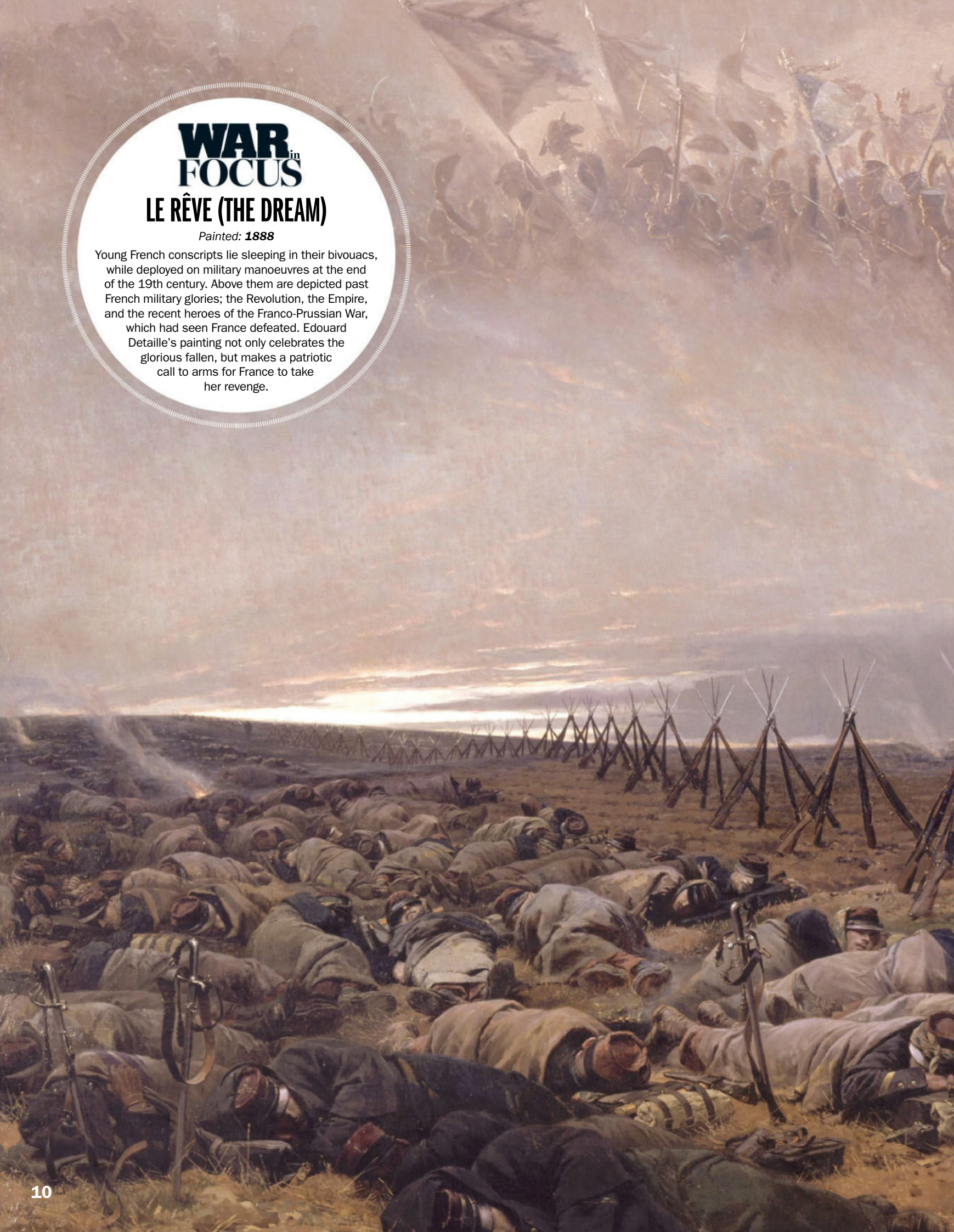
MiGs were travelling to the air show, in British Columbia, for the first time.

WARⁱⁿ FOCUS

LE RÊVE (THE DREAM)

Painted: 1888

Young French conscripts lie sleeping in their bivouacs, while deployed on military manoeuvres at the end of the 19th century. Above them are depicted past French military glories; the Revolution, the Empire, and the recent heroes of the Franco-Prussian War, which had seen France defeated. Edouard Detaille's painting not only celebrates the glorious fallen, but makes a patriotic call to arms for France to take her revenge.





WAR **in** **FOCUS**

PENGUIN PATROL

Taken: 1983

An inquisitive gentoo penguin stops to inspect a British soldier's weapon, on a Falkland Island beach. The Falklands are home to a thriving population of king, gentoo, rockhopper and other penguins, all of which benefit from the limited human presence over much of the islands' coasts.





AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

In a war of changing fortunes, both sides experienced exhilarating victories and crushing defeats before the colonies earned their independence

THE SHOT HEARD ROUND THE WORLD

Growing discontent in the colonies erupted into violence on 19 April 1775, when British troops exchanged fire with rebel militia at Lexington and at the North Bridge in Concord, later the same morning.

Lexington and Concord marked the start of hostilities between Britain and her former colonies

19 APRIL 1775

1776

26 DECEMBER 1776

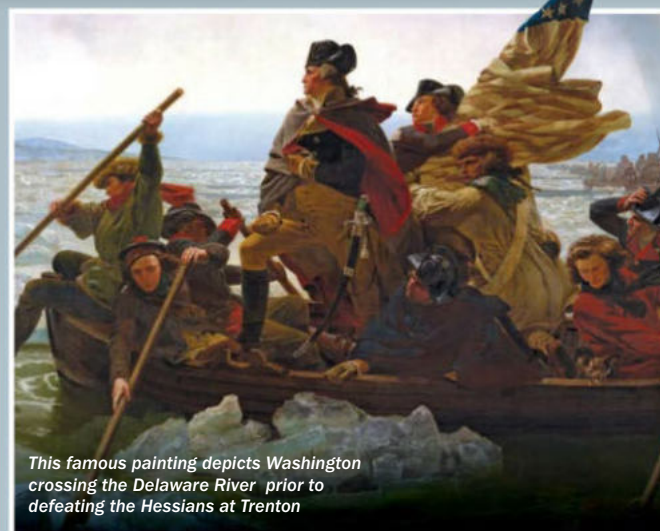
Below: American forces flee from the British assault on Long Island, having been outflanked by Howe's army

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Forced out of Boston, the British return to take New York in late 1776. George Washington's army proved unable to resist William Howe's forces and the British had the foothold required to begin the suppression of the rebellion.

WASHINGTON'S DESPERATE GAMBLE

After a disastrous 1776 campaign, Washington launches a successful attack on the Hessian garrison at Trenton on 26 December.





“FRANCE OFFICIALLY DECLARES WAR ON GREAT BRITAIN, AND FRENCH WARSHIPS FINALLY BEGIN TO CHALLENGE THE LONG-HELD BRITISH NAVAL SUPERIORITY IN NORTH AMERICAN WATERS”



THE FRENCH ARE COMING!

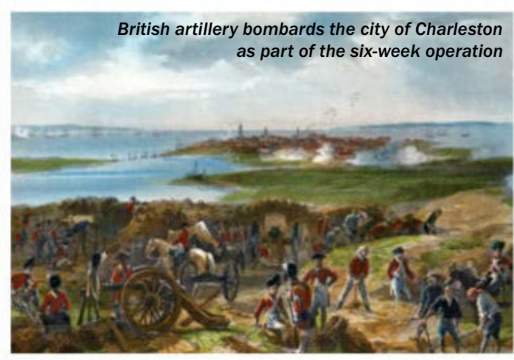
In 1778, France officially declares war on Great Britain, and French warships finally begin to challenge the long-held British naval superiority in North American waters.

French and British fleets clash at the Battle of the Chesapeake, in 1781, setting the stage for the American victory at Yorktown

‘GENTLEMAN JOHNNY’ BURGoyNE COMES UNSTUCK

In 1777, 6,000 British troops under John Burgoyne are captured at Saratoga while heading south along the Hudson river.

Below: General John Burgoyne offers his sword to General Horatio Gates at Saratoga



British artillery bombards the city of Charleston as part of the six-week operation

THE WAR TURNS SOUTH

After the failure of the Hudson strategy, Britain refocuses its efforts on the southern colonies and the city of Charleston, South Carolina. This city falls to Henry Clinton in May 1780, capturing 5,000 American troops.

THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

Following Charles Cornwallis’s push into North Carolina and Virginia in 1781, he was forced to withdraw to Yorktown, but French intervention cut off this escape route and a combined French/American army eventually forced his humiliating surrender. At this point the war was effectively over.

Images: Corbis

1777

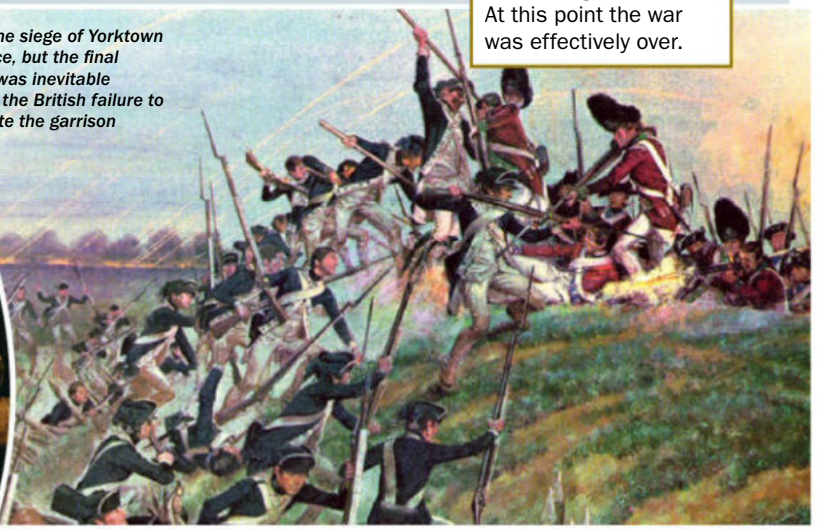
1778

MAY 1780

1781



Fighting during the siege of Yorktown was often fierce, but the final conclusion was inevitable following the British failure to evacuate the garrison



WAR ON THE CONTINENTS

The War of Independence was not simply a private quarrel between Britain and its colonies – it embroiled many other nations as well

1 BUNKER HILL

17 JUNE 1775

American forces occupy a hill overlooking Boston (actually Breed's Hill, rather than Bunker Hill) and it costs the British more than 1,000 casualties to take it back.

The perfectly aligned redcoats march on to the Battle of Bunker Hill as painted by Howard Pyle 100 years on



2 NEW YORK

22 AUGUST–15 SEPTEMBER 1776

The British offensive opens with a typical methodical operation to take the city of New York, which has been extensively fortified by the Americans

3 TRENTON

26 DECEMBER 1776

Perhaps the most significant American victory of the entire war – though small in scale, it revives Patriot morale and shatters the illusion of British invincibility.

4 BRANDYWINE

11 SEPTEMBER 1777

Washington chooses to defend Philadelphia but is once more defeated by Howe, leaving the capital open for the British to occupy just over two weeks later.

5 MONMOUTH COURTHOUSE

28 JUNE 1778

The last major battle in the north, American forces attempt and fail to destroy Henry Clinton's army as it marches from Philadelphia to New York.

THE BOSTON MASSACRE

Date: 5 March 1770 **Location:** Boston
British troops open fire on a mob in Boston, killing five.

THE BOSTON TEA PARTY

Date: 1774 **Location:** Boston
Patriots destroy a shipment of East India tea in a protest against taxation.

THE INTOLERABLE ACTS

Date: 1774 **Location:** Boston
Britain passes a series of acts to punish Massachusetts for its insubordination.

THE FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

Date: 1774 **Location:** Philadelphia

'COMMON SENSE' PUBLISHED

Date: 1776 **Location:** Philadelphia
Influential pro-independence pamphlet written by Thomas Paine.

PENNSYLVANIA LINE MUTINIES

Date: 1781
Location: Jockey Hollow, New Jersey
Continental infantrymen revolt over conditions and failure to receive pay.

PROCLAMATION OF 1763

Date: 1763
Location: North American colonies
Britain forbids colonial expansion west of the Appalachian Mountains.

VALLEY FORGE

Date: Winter of 1777-78
Location: Philadelphia

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Date: 4 July 1776 **Location:** Philadelphia

US CONSTITUTION SIGNED

Date: 17 September 1787 **Location:** Philadelphia

"JOHN BURGoyNE MOVES HIS ARMY DOWN THE HUDSON TOWARDS ALBANY. HIS EVENTUAL CAPITULATION IS A TURNING POINT IN THE WAR"

6 SARATOGA CAMPAIGN

JUNE-OCTOBER 1777

As part of the Hudson strategy, John Burgoyne moves his army down the Hudson towards Albany. His eventual capitulation is a turning point in the war.

7 SIEGE OF CHARLESTON

1 SEPTEMBER-11 MAY 1780

Britain's new southern strategy opens with a major success, the capture of the important town of Charleston, along with more than 5,000 American soldiers.

8 CAMDEN

16 AUGUST 1780

The last unequivocal triumph of the war for the British. Lord Cornwallis completely destroys the rebel army under Horatio Gates.

The death of De Kalb during the Battle of Camden



“BRITAIN’S NEW SOUTHERN STRATEGY OPENS WITH A MAJOR SUCCESS, THE CAPTURE OF THE IMPORTANT TOWN OF CHARLESTON, ALONG WITH MORE THAN 5,000 AMERICAN SOLDIERS”



Left: The British forces are defeated at King's Mountain, resulting in the death of Ferguson

9 KING'S MOUNTAIN

7 OCTOBER 1780

A 1,000-strong British force under Patrick Ferguson is wiped out by rebels, starting the process of weakening the British army in the south.

10 COWPENS

17 JANUARY 1781

Just three months later, the British suffer a second major reverse as Banastre Tarleton's corps is decisively defeated by Daniel Morgan.

11 GUILFORD COURTHOUSE

15 MARCH 1781

Cornwallis, after chasing the rebel army under Nathanael Greene for weeks, finally catches him, but pays a high price for his victory on the battlefield, losing a quarter of his army.

12 SIEGE OF YORKTOWN

1-19 OCTOBER 1781

Having been forced to retreat to Yorktown, where he hopes to be evacuated by British naval forces, Cornwallis instead finds himself under siege and is finally forced to surrender his entire army.

THE OLIVE BRANCH PETITION

Date: 1775 Location: London

THE NETHERLANDS JOINS THE WAR

Date: 1780 Location: Holland

THE HOWE INQUIRY

Date: 1779 Location: London

The British General William Howe attempts to clear his name after failing to end the rebellion.

TREATY OF PARIS

Date: 1783 Location: France

Britain recognises the former colonies as free, sovereign and independent states.

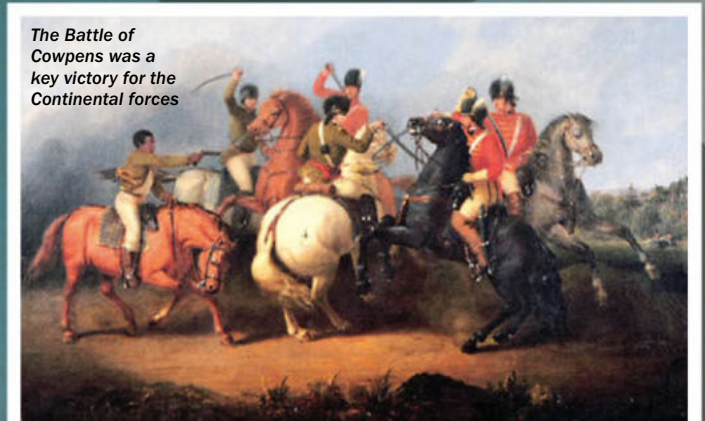
SPAIN JOINS THE WAR

Date: 1779 Location: Spain

FRANCE DECLARES WAR ON BRITAIN

Date: 1778 Location: France

The Battle of Cowpens was a key victory for the Continental forces



GENERALS ON THE FRONTLINE

The leaders who made the difference between victory and defeat

CHARLES CORNWALLIS

YEARS ACTIVE: 1776-81

ALLEGIANCE: BRITISH ARMY

Although famous as the man who surrendered at Yorktown, effectively ending the war, Cornwallis deserves to be known for much more. He was an aggressive and thoroughly professional officer and his regiment, the 33rd, was recognised as one of the best in the army.

Cornwallis was beloved by his men and concerned with the wellbeing of the common soldier. This even stretched to other regiments, as demonstrated when he bought a new set of uniforms, out of his own money, for a unit of Hessians.

Having to serve under the plodding Howe early in the war, and under the unpredictable Henry Clinton in the later phases, he was seldom given free rein. When he was granted an independent command he enjoyed both great success, at Camden, and humiliating failure at Yorktown, but his approach to the war (move quickly and hit hard) may well have proved effective had it been employed earlier.

The defining moment of Cornwallis's career came with his surrender at Yorktown, though he sent a subordinate to offer his sword in his stead



HENRY CLINTON

YEARS ACTIVE: 1775-82

ALLEGIANCE: BRITISH ARMY

Clinton remains a compelling figure thanks to his remarkable character.

Pathologically unable to get on with his fellow officers, he was constantly grumbling that nobody would pay any attention to his plans for running the war.

Although it would be easy to dismiss this as self-pity, the fascinating fact about Clinton

Henry Clinton's greatest failing was an inability to get on with his fellow officers

is that his plans were nearly always better than those that were actually employed. He was bolder than Howe and had a more realistic grasp of the necessities of the war. He also seems to have been alone in sensing trouble for Burgoyne in 1777.

Where Clinton let himself down was during his period in overall command, following the resignation of Howe in 1778. Full of bright ideas as a subordinate, Clinton became cautious when responsibility fell on his shoulders and he ended the war in a state of near paralysis at New York, while Cornwallis was bottled up and defeated at Yorktown.

Before the Revolution, Washington served as a militia officer, in the French and Indian War

GEORGE WASHINGTON

YEARS ACTIVE: 1775-83

ALLEGIANCE: CONTINENTAL ARMY

Having gained experience as a militia officer during the French and Indian War, Washington had credibility as a candidate to command the Continental Army, but he was also seen as a means of unifying the colonies in their struggle. The New Englanders could already be counted on, but the tall Virginian would hopefully encourage the southern colonies as well.

Washington was a naturally aggressive commander, but he had to temper his ambitions due to the inexperienced nature of his army. Nearly destroyed by Howe during fighting around New York in 1776, he reserved his finest action of the war for the very end of that campaign, when he surprised and captured the Hessian garrison at Trenton, New Jersey.

Although limited as a battlefield commander, Washington had the critical ability to keep the core of his army intact, ensuring that the flame of independence was never quite extinguished.



NATHANAEL GREENE

YEARS ACTIVE: 1775-83

ALLEGIANCE: CONTINENTAL ARMY

Greene famously climbed the military ladder, having started as a private in the militia. Although selected to command the American forces on Long Island in 1776, an illness meant he was absent when the British attacked. He was always, however, a favourite of Washington and the commander-in-chief lost no time in nominating Greene when a new general was needed in the southern theatre following the disastrous defeat of Horatio Gates at Camden.

Greene's subsequent performance was in some ways the mirror image of William Howe's. Greene suffered one defeat after another, yet he managed to so weaken the British under Cornwallis that they were forced to retire to Yorktown. Greene's greatest success was in selling Cornwallis a Pyrrhic victory at Guilford Courthouse in 1781 and his attitude was neatly summed up in his comment that: "We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again."

"GREENE SUFFERED ONE DEFEAT AFTER ANOTHER, YET HE MANAGED TO SO WEAKEN THE BRITISH UNDER CORNWALLIS THAT THEY WERE FORCED TO RETIRE TO YORKTOWN"

Greene's stubbornness in the south did much to pave the way for the Americans' eventual victory



WILHELM VON KNYPHAUSEN

YEARS ACTIVE: 1776-82

ALLEGIANCE: HESSIAN FORCES

As second-in-command of the Hessian forces that served under William Howe, von Knyphausen was nearing his 60th birthday when he reached the colonies. Despite this, he was favoured by Howe over the even older Leopold Philip von Heister, whom Howe took an instant dislike to.

Co-operation between British and German troops was essential if the war was to go well, but Howe and von Heister were never able to work out an amicable and harmonious relationship.

While von Heister appeared reluctant to order his men into combat, von Knyphausen was perfectly happy to serve. At the storming of Fort Mifflin, just days after his 60th birthday, von Knyphausen led his men from the front, tearing down obstacles with his bare hands. The captured stronghold was rechristened 'Fort Mifflin' in his honour and, upon the recall of von Heister (demanded by Howe), von Knyphausen assumed command of the German troops.

Although ageing by the time he reached America, von Knyphausen had plenty of fight left in him



Dashing and bold as a regimental commander, Howe became cautious and slow-moving as a general

WILLIAM HOWE

YEARS ACTIVE: 1775-78

ALLEGIANCE: BRITISH ARMY

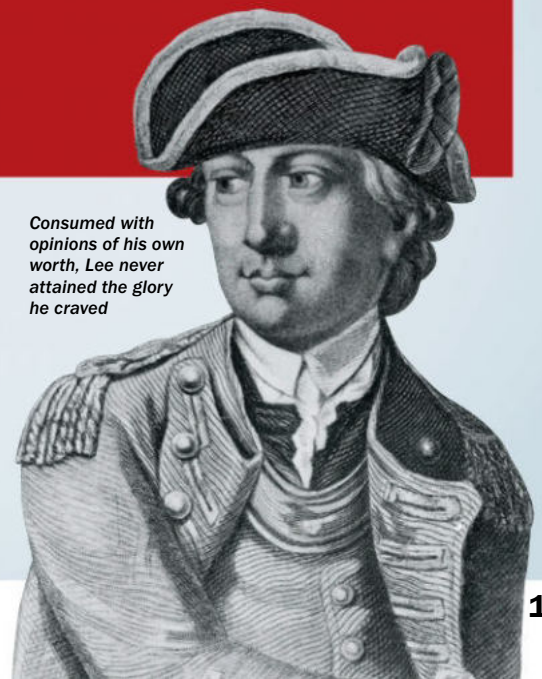
As commander-in-chief of the British Army in North America for the first two campaigns of the War of Independence, William Howe did more to influence the course and outcome of the war than any other British general. Although technically answering to the Secretary of State for the Colonies Lord George Germain, Howe was granted tremendous latitude and was effectively able to do as he pleased.

A veteran of the French and Indian War of 1754-63, Howe was recognised as an authority on light infantry tactics. This sort of experience was considered invaluable by Germain when he hand-picked the general to take command of the army from the ineffectual Thomas Gage. Howe appeared to be clear in his thinking on the war, submitting a simple yet plausible plan (the so-called 'Hudson strategy' that involved the co-operation of two British armies, one moving south from Canada, the other north from New York) and a request for reinforcements that must have struck Germain as more than reasonable.

Eventually opening his first campaign, in August 1776, with an army of about 30,000 men (considerably more than he had requested), Howe proceeded to win a string of indecisive victories. Constantly seeming to be on the verge of knocking the rebel army out of the war, he repeatedly let it slip through his fingers, ensuring that a second campaign would be needed.

Before that campaign had even started, Howe fell out disastrously with Germain over a request for further reinforcements. Thoroughly disenchanted with the war, Howe abandoned the strategy he had suggested and instead expended the entire 1777 campaign on capturing the rebel capital at Philadelphia. It was another indecisive victory and, while he had been focused on Philadelphia, John Burgoyne's army had been captured at Saratoga. Howe resigned his position and returned to Britain to clear his name. He never commanded an army in battle again.

Consumed with opinions of his own worth, Lee never attained the glory he craved



CHARLES LEE

YEARS ACTIVE: 1775-80

ALLEGIANCE: CONTINENTAL ARMY

Charles Lee might have been one of the heroes of the revolution, had his offer to command the rebel army been accepted. As a former British army officer and soldier of fortune (he had risen to the rank of general in the Polish army) he had the experience necessary, but the Americans preferred a home-grown commander-in-chief.

Nevertheless, Lee might still have earned distinction as Washington's de facto second-in-command, but his prickly nature was always a problem. Captured by the British at the end of the 1776 campaign, he was free with his opinions on how the rebels could be defeated, yet returned to the service of the United States when exchanged in 1778.

His last significant act in the war was to engage in a furious argument with Washington on the battlefield at Monmouth. Two years later, he was dismissed from the Continental Army.

WAS BRITISH STRATEGY DOOMED TO FAIL?

Britain's war against the rebels could easily have ended in a victory

Despite the common belief that arrogance and over-confidence played major roles in the loss of the 13 colonies in North America, Britain was actually well aware of how difficult the task of quelling the rebellion would be. There was no hope of conquering America – the territory was too big and available resources too meagre.

At the outbreak of hostilities, the British Army numbered just 45,000 men, spread over a substantial global empire. It would take time to raise new troops and even the hiring of Hessian soldiers would require lengthy negotiations.

The key men in the planning for the war therefore put together a strategy that promised disproportionate results in relation to the effort involved. The plan, which became known as the

'Hudson strategy', involved operations along the Hudson River, running up from New York to Canada. This had always been a strategically important river and it was hoped that by taking control of it, Britain could isolate rebellious New England from the more moderate middle and southern colonies.

By isolating New England from its supply base to the south, it was believed the rebellion could be strangled into submission.

First steps

Two armies were tasked with taking control of the Hudson. The larger, under William Howe, would move up the Hudson from New York, while a smaller army, under Guy Carleton, would move down it from Canada. The plan became somewhat muddled at this point, as it was

unclear whether the two armies were expected to actually meet, or if they were simply to set up various strongholds along the length of the river.

Stage one of the strategy was achieved without difficulty when Howe took control of New York in September 1776, but Carleton's progress was slow and he eventually abandoned his southwards push.

This set the scene for a spectacular breakdown in co-operation between British forces, which doomed the Hudson strategy to failure. With a new commanding officer, John Burgoyne, the northern army again began its push down the Hudson in the next campaign. Burgoyne was confident and bold and he wasn't about to turn back, as Carleton had done.

The problem was, there was no army marching up the Hudson to support him. Howe

"BY ISOLATING NEW ENGLAND FROM ITS SUPPLY BASE TO THE SOUTH, IT WAS BELIEVED THE REBELLION COULD BE STRANGLED INTO SUBMISSION"



The Hudson River, running from New York to Canada, was the focal point of the first British strategy of the war

The Americans won a decisive victory over the British at the Battle of Saratoga



had decided to capture Philadelphia instead and the Secretary of State for the Colonies Lord George Germain had acquiesced in this unilateral abandoning of the agreed strategy.

When Burgoyne ran into difficulties, Howe was not close enough to offer assistance and the result was the loss of an entire army at the Battle of Saratoga.

The southern strategy

Britain needed to rethink its plan, and there followed a period of intense discussion. Finally, a consensus was reached that the war would shift to the south, aiming to re-establish control in the less militant southern colonies. This would have

the same effect of denying the northern colonies their supply base, but would require a smaller army to enact.

This was important, because the entry of France into the war had changed its scale entirely. Britain was actually more concerned now with protecting its West Indies possessions from the French.

Starting in South Carolina, with the capture of Charleston on 11 May 1780, Britain aimed to subdue the southern colonies region by region, raising loyalist forces to keep

the peace while the small British army moved on to the next target. This second British strategy unravelled when the loyalist forces proved unable to match the fiercer Patriot militia. Whenever the British army left an area, resistance would flare up behind it.

The commanding officer in the south, Lord Cornwallis, was also aware that his army was too small to defend any substantial area of territory, so he moved aggressively, targeting any remnants of organised resistance. This worked at the Battle of Camden, where an American army under Horatio Gates was destroyed, but the momentum could not be maintained without an inevitable and debilitating erosion of his army from sickness, fatigue and battle casualties.

The British war effort eventually simply ran out of steam and ground to a halt at Yorktown. On 19 October 1781, Cornwallis surrendered his battered army to the Americans – the British strategies had failed.

Right: Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, in October 1777, heralded the abandonment of the Hudson strategy



IN THE RANKS OF THE REVOLUTION

A colourful array of professional and amateur soldiers made their own mark on the war for independence

Although the accepted image of the American Revolution is that of lines of British redcoats facing up to swarms of American riflemen, the truth is that the war required many different types of fighting men. From citizen-soldiers to hired guns, marksmen and disciplined heavy infantry, the battlefields of North America were a scene of great variety.

"LIGHTLY EQUIPPED, THEY HAD TO BE ABLE TO MOVE FAST AND OPERATE INDEPENDENTLY. THEY WERE THE ELITE TROOPS OF THE BRITISH ARMY"

BRITISH LIGHT INFANTRYMAN

THESE UNITS WERE SPECIALLY TRAINED TO OPERATE IN THE RUGGED WILDERNESS OF NORTH AMERICA

Britain's redcoats had a reputation for discipline and doggedness that was well deserved, but in the broken terrain of the American colonies, a different form of infantryman was often required.

This lesson had been learned in the French and Indian War of 1754-63, which saw the British Army create light infantry units to match the Native American and French Canadian irregulars they were fighting. Discipline was still essential, but the light infantryman was also required to be resourceful, self-reliant and able to use his own initiative. They were selected from the fittest, most agile men in the army and operated in companies or composite battalions.

Light infantrymen were not generally asked to fight in the traditional line formations, but instead operated in between the opposing armies. Lightly equipped, they had to be able to move fast and operate independently. They were the elite troops of the British Army.

Left: Light infantrymen adapted their uniforms to make them less cumbersome, including cutting their coats short

AMERICAN MILITIAMAN

UNSTEADY IN A CONVENTIONAL BATTLE LINE, THE AMERICAN MILITIA COULD NEVERTHELESS MAKE A DECISIVE CONTRIBUTION IN THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES

Citizen soldiers willing to turn out at short notice when an enemy force threatened their territory, American militiamen were also just as likely to head for home at the most inopportune moment. The weapons they brought to the battlefield were usually their own and their training was brief and rudimentary, but they always had to be accounted for and could tip the balance of a campaign, never more so than when they helped overwhelm the British army under John Burgoyne at Saratoga.

Right: Militiamen were often called 'Minutemen', as they were known for being ready in a minute's notice



PRIVATE, VOLUNTEERS OF IRELAND

LOYALIST FORCES WERE NEVER FULLY EXPLOITED BY THE BRITISH, BUT THOSE UNITS THAT WERE RAISED PROVED DEPENDABLE

Britain was constantly overestimating loyalist sympathies in the rebellious colonies, while simultaneously failing to properly mobilise the support that was available. Units like the Volunteers of Ireland, commanded by the charismatic Lord Rawdon, proved that they could take their place on the battlefield alongside the regular British soldiers. Equipped as well as their redcoat comrades, and viewed as a full-time 'provincial' unit, the Volunteers of Ireland performed with great distinction in the southern theatre, especially at the Battle of Camden in 1780.

Right: The privates of the Volunteers of Ireland dressed in traditional redcoat uniform



MUSKETEER, HESSIAN REGIMENT PRINZ CARL

HIRED FROM A NUMBER OF GERMAN PRINCIPALITIES, THE TROOPS KNOWN COLLECTIVELY AS 'HESSIANS' HAD A TERRIFYING REPUTATION

The notion that Britain had a huge army at the start of the War of Independence is nothing more than a myth, and in order to raise a big enough force to tackle the rebels, German soldiers had to be hired. From various principalities, including Hesse-Cassel, the soldiers were known collectively as 'Hessians'. Disciplined and stern, and rumoured to favour the bayonet, the rebels were terrified of them in the initial stages of the war, but soon learned that they were just men after all.

Left: Hessians were sent in entire units along with their usual uniforms, flags, equipment, and officers



AMERICAN RIFLEMAN

THE REPUTATION OF THE AMERICAN RIFLEMAN CAUSED MORE THAN A FEW SLEEPLESS NIGHTS FOR THE REDCOATS THAT WOULD FACE THEM

The accuracy of American sharpshooters is one of the enduring legends of the war. It is far from a myth, because British officers learned to dread the distinctive buzzing noise of a rifle bullet whizzing past their ears. The American riflemen focused their attentions on officers, often picking them off at long range and effectively decapitating British units, but they were also vulnerable to British light infantrymen, due to the extraordinary amount of time (several minutes) it took to reload their long rifles.

“THE AMERICAN RIFLEMEN FOCUSED THEIR ATTENTIONS ON OFFICERS, OFTEN PICKING THEM OFF AT LONG RANGE AND EFFECTIVELY DECAPITATING BRITISH UNITS”



HEAD TO HEAD

If the Americans were to win their independence, they would need to match the British redcoat. The Continental infantryman was their response

BRITISH INFANTRYMAN (REDCOAT)

LOYALTY: GREAT BRITAIN

TRAINING

The redcoat was drilled thoroughly during initial training, but any further training was at the whim of the officer of each regiment. Real experience was gained on the battlefield.

DISCIPLINE

British infantry had a reputation for holding their ground whatever the enemy threw at them, but there was a worrying streak of reckless over-confidence in some units at the start of the war.

ARMAMENT

The famed 'Brown Bess' musket was a dependable if unspectacular weapon. Fired in massed volleys, it was inaccurate but had formidable stopping power when its heavy bullet found a target.

SUPPLY

Although at the end of a supply chain stretching more than 3,000 miles, the British redcoat had ample resources to draw from. Camp equipage, tents and armaments were adequate, though food was often appalling.

MOTIVATION

Esprit de Corps was strong in most British regiments, but fighting at such a distance from home and against people viewed mainly as fellow Englishmen was a negative influence.

TOTAL



LEGENDARY COMPANY

Recruitment of new soldiers was a major problem for the British throughout the war, not least because the regular army was in competition for recruits with the private army of the East India Company. The knowledge that reinforcements would be limited and slow to arrive made British generals cautious about risking their men in battle. It was often said that numbers were so scarce that the British could not even afford a victory. Costly engagements, like those at Bunker Hill and Guilford Courthouse, proved how true this was.



Left: At the Battle of Bunker Hill, the British eventually prevailed, but suffered more than 1,000 casualties



INEXPERIENCED COMPETITION

Although the story of the Continental infantryman is generally one of ineffectiveness gradually being replaced by experience and resilience, some units distinguished themselves from the very start of the war. On Long Island, in August 1776, men of the Delaware and Maryland Regiments performed as well as the redcoats and Hessians they were opposing. The proud history of these units was only enhanced as the war progressed and they were still serving with exemplary courage at the Battle of Camden in 1780.



Left: The Delaware Regiment performed admirably at the Battle of Long Island, 27 August 1776

“ESPRIT DE CORPS WAS STRONG IN MOST BRITISH REGIMENTS, BUT FIGHTING AT SUCH A DISTANCE FROM HOME AND AGAINST PEOPLE VIEWED MAINLY AS FELLOW ENGLISHMEN WAS A NEGATIVE INFLUENCE”

CONTINENTAL INFANTRYMAN

LOYALTY: THE UNITED STATES

TRAINING

The Americans had to learn on the job, as the vast majority had been private citizens before the war. The experience of the few former European officers in their fledgling army would prove invaluable.

DISCIPLINE

Although not initially as resilient on the battlefield, the Americans improved quickly and their best units were more than a match for the redcoats by the end of the war.

ARMAMENT

Large numbers of French ‘Charleville’ muskets helped equip the rebel soldiers, but many also made do with their own muskets or rifles. Thousands of firearms were lost when American soldiers fled during early engagements.

SUPPLY

Although fighting on ‘home ground’, the Continental Army was woefully neglected by Congress. Often ill equipped, seldom paid and sometimes close to starvation, only their remarkable resilience kept an army in the field.

MOTIVATION

The added incentive of defending their homeland, plus the privations endured in the opening campaigns of the war (notably during the terrible winter of 1777-78 at Valley Forge), forged a grim determination in the American soldier.

TOTAL



“ON LONG ISLAND, IN AUGUST 1776, MEN OF THE DELAWARE AND MARYLAND REGIMENTS PERFORMED AS WELL AS THE REDCOATS AND HESSIANS THEY WERE OPPOSING”



Illustrations: Jean-Michel Girard / The Art Agency

BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND

The first major battle of the war was also one of the largest, and it saw the British win a stunning victory

Possession of New York was essential if the British were going to gain control over the Hudson River and implement their chosen strategy for the war. The Americans realised this as well and spent months preparing their defences, both on Manhattan (also known as York Island) and Long Island.

The British commander, William Howe, had been in no hurry to open his campaign, but he finally landed forces on Long Island on 22 August 1776. Five days later, he was ready to attack.

“WASHINGTON’S ARMY WAS RIDDLED WITH CAMP DISEASES AND MANY MEN WERE UNABLE TO SERVE WITH THEIR REGIMENTS WHEN THE LONG-AWAITED BRITISH OFFENSIVE FINALLY BEGAN”

1. THE BROOKLYN LINES

The main American defensive works on Long Island comprises five forts or redoubts, with connecting trenches, strung across the neck of the Brooklyn peninsula. The Americans hope to inflict serious casualties when the British attack.

2. THE GOWANUS HEIGHTS

An advanced defensive line occupies a ridge of thickly wooded high ground running across the island. Three routes through the Gowanus Heights are defended with infantry and artillery units.

3. THE UNGUARDED PASS

Bafflingly, the Americans fail to defend a fourth route through the Gowanus Heights – the Jamaica Pass – perhaps hoping it is so far away the British will not be aware of it.

4. THE FLANKING MARCH

The British are aware of this route (Henry Clinton, Howe’s second-in-command, had lived on Long Island as a boy) and mount a night-time flanking march with the intention of getting 10,000 redcoats behind the first American defensive line

5. THE DIVERSION

To occupy the Americans’ attention while the flanking march is undertaken, Howe orders General James Grant to stage a diversionary assault against defenders along the Coast Road. This also serves to draw reinforcements away from the Brooklyn lines.

6. THE SIGNAL CANNON

At 9am on 27 August, two cannon shots are fired. This is the signal that Howe’s flanking column has reached Bedford and the assault on the Gowanus Heights positions can begin in earnest.

7. THE RETREAT TO THE LINES

With their position untenable, the Americans flee from the Gowanus Heights and flood back to the Brooklyn defences. Many do not make it as British and Hessian forces attack them front and rear.

8. THE STAND OF THE MARYLANDERS

To buy time for their comrades to escape across marshland, a portion of the Maryland Regiment stage a delaying action against overwhelming British numbers. Less than a dozen of them escape death, injury or capture, but their sacrifice allows hundreds to escape.

9. THE RECALL

With the British in full cry, Howe calls back an attempted assault on the main Brooklyn lines, choosing instead to open siege works. He will later cite a desire to limit casualties as the reason for his controversial decision.

10. THE AMERICAN RETREAT

Two nights later, under cover of darkness, Washington is able to evacuate his entire command, along with all of their artillery. Although the Americans consider this to have been a humiliating defeat, their army has survived to fight another day.

AMERICAN LOSSES

IT WAS ONCE BELIEVED THAT A MASSACRE HAD PLAYED OUT ALONG THE GOWANUS HEIGHTS, BUT AMERICAN LOSSES ARE NOW THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN FAR FEWER

It is almost impossible to be sure of American casualties during the Battle of Long Island, because there is so much confusion over the strength of units in battle that day.

Washington’s army was riddled with camp diseases and many men were unable to serve with their regiments when the long-awaited British offensive finally began. Add to this confusion over the paper strength of regiments, and it is unclear exactly how many men were manning the Gowanus Heights.

The British also inflated the numbers of dead, wounded and captured, possibly as a simple result of the confusion of the battle, but possibly for propaganda purposes.

There was also an unpleasant streak of relish in British reports, with one officer gloating over the fact that the Hessians had been particularly merciless in their use of the bayonet, suggesting that even men attempting to surrender had been run through.

Howe’s initial battle report claimed more than 3,000 Americans were either captured or killed, but recent research suggests the number was more like 1,000.

It was still a significant blow for an army to sustain in its first pitched battle and Washington’s men were badly shaken, with many deserting in the days that followed.



Although badly mauled on Long Island, the bulk of Washington’s army escaped over the East River to Manhattan



Great Battles

SECOND BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN

WORDS TOM GARNER

EGYPT, 23 OCTOBER – 11 NOVEMBER 1942

Montgomery's Eighth Army takes on Rommel's Axis coalition in this huge desert clash to decide the course of World War II

For most of 1942, the North African campaign had not gone well for the Allies. Since the fall of France in 1940, Britain had borne the brunt of the fighting against both Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, but two years later, the struggle in the desert had witnessed dramatic changes in fortunes on both sides.

With the Axis dominating the northern half of the Mediterranean Sea, Britain's imperial possessions in the Middle East came under direct threat. Chief among their concerns was the security of the Suez Canal. If Axis forces took it, then Britain's communication and supply routes to its empire in India and the Far East would be cut off. Without the canal, it was widely believed that Britain could not carry on fighting the war.

Both sides knew this, and therefore the deserts of North Africa became an intense fighting ground that ebbed and flowed depending on the combatants' fighting ability, logistical constraints and the strategic priorities of political leaders. At first things went well for the British. They were initially faced with the Italians who attacked Egypt from their colony of Libya, but were easily swept back. Next, however, they faced the Afrika Korps of the Wehrmacht sent by Adolf Hitler in support of his Italian allies. The Korps was led by the formidable Field Marshal Erwin Rommel – a highly experienced general, tank commander, decorated World War I veteran and a key player during the Battle of France. His use of surprise tactics and continued momentum to push the Allies out of Libya, despite often being outnumbered, soon earned him the nickname the 'Desert Fox'.

By 1942, the British Eighth Army was withdrawing to the Egyptian frontier. The Allied fortress of Tobruk fell on 21 June with more than 30,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers taken prisoner. This was the largest number of Allied prisoners taken since the fall of Singapore earlier in the year. This meant the situation had become perilous for the British.

However, one of Rommel's weaknesses was that he often suffered from a shortage of supplies, particularly fuel for his panzers and other armoured vehicles. This was largely



“WITH THE AXIS DOMINATING THE NORTHERN HALF OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA, BRITAIN’S IMPERIAL POSSESSIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST CAME UNDER DIRECT THREAT”

OPPOSING FORCES



ALLIES

LEADER

Bernard Montgomery

SOLDIERS 195,000

TANKS 1,000

ARTILLERY 900

ANTI-TANK GUNS 1,400

VS



AXIS

LEADER

Erwin Rommel

SOLDIERS 116,000

TANKS 540

ARTILLERY 500

ANTI-TANK GUNS 490

Two Commonwealth soldiers capture a German on 25 October during a sandstorm. British imperial troops formed a significant part of the Eighth Army





because the Royal Navy and RAF in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic harassed the German supply routes. This handicap was temporarily eased by the fall of Tobruk, as Rommel captured lots of supplies from the British. This enabled him to advance much further into Egypt.

Building defences

There was now a real threat that Egypt could fall to the Axis forces and the entire North African campaign would be lost. By this time, the USA had entered the war but not yet arrived in sufficient numbers to tip the balance in the Allies' favour. It was up to the Eighth Army to reorganise and throw Rommel back.

The British commander, Lieutenant General Claude Auchinleck, constructed a new defence line from the minor railway station at El Alamein. The line stretched more than 30 miles from the coast to the Qattara Depression in the south. The Depression was important, as its terrain was full of features that were impossible for motorised vehicles to pass through, such as salt lakes and very fine powdered sand. Additionally, the El Alamein defences were effectively fenced off at the Depression by high cliffs, which made it impossible for Rommel to outflank the British. For the Eighth Army, the

Alamein line became the last defence – if Axis forces broke through, Auchinleck intended to hold the Germans on the Suez Canal and even in Palestine if necessary.

What became known as the First Battle of El Alamein started on 1 July when Rommel attacked the British line. This offensive was repulsed thanks to the Desert Air Force and a timely sandstorm, so Rommel made further assaults against the line throughout the month, all unsuccessful.

At the same time, the British could not drive Rommel back. The result was a stalemate. This first battle prevented Rommel from advancing further into Egypt, but it was only a temporary measure. El Alamein was 240 kilometres from Cairo and, more alarmingly, only 106 kilometres from the vital port of Alexandria. The sense of emergency was becoming acute.

In particular, Winston Churchill was becoming highly impatient with his generals – the British Army had not won a major land battle since the war began and he was becoming increasingly frustrated with the situation in North Africa. He remarked after the fall of Tobruk: "Defeat is one thing, disgrace is another," and he was still not satisfied after the First Battle of El Alamein had checked the Axis advance. Even Rommel remarked to captured British soldiers at Tobruk:

"Gentlemen, you have fought like lions and been led by donkeys."

Churchill needed to prove to his new American allies that the British were a force to be reckoned with on the battlefield. With that in mind, he removed Auchinleck, despite his early success at El Alamein, and installed Lieutenant General William Gott as commander of Eighth Army. However, before he could take up his post, Gott was shot down and killed in a plane crash. He was then replaced by Lieutenant General Bernard Montgomery.

Monty's moment comes

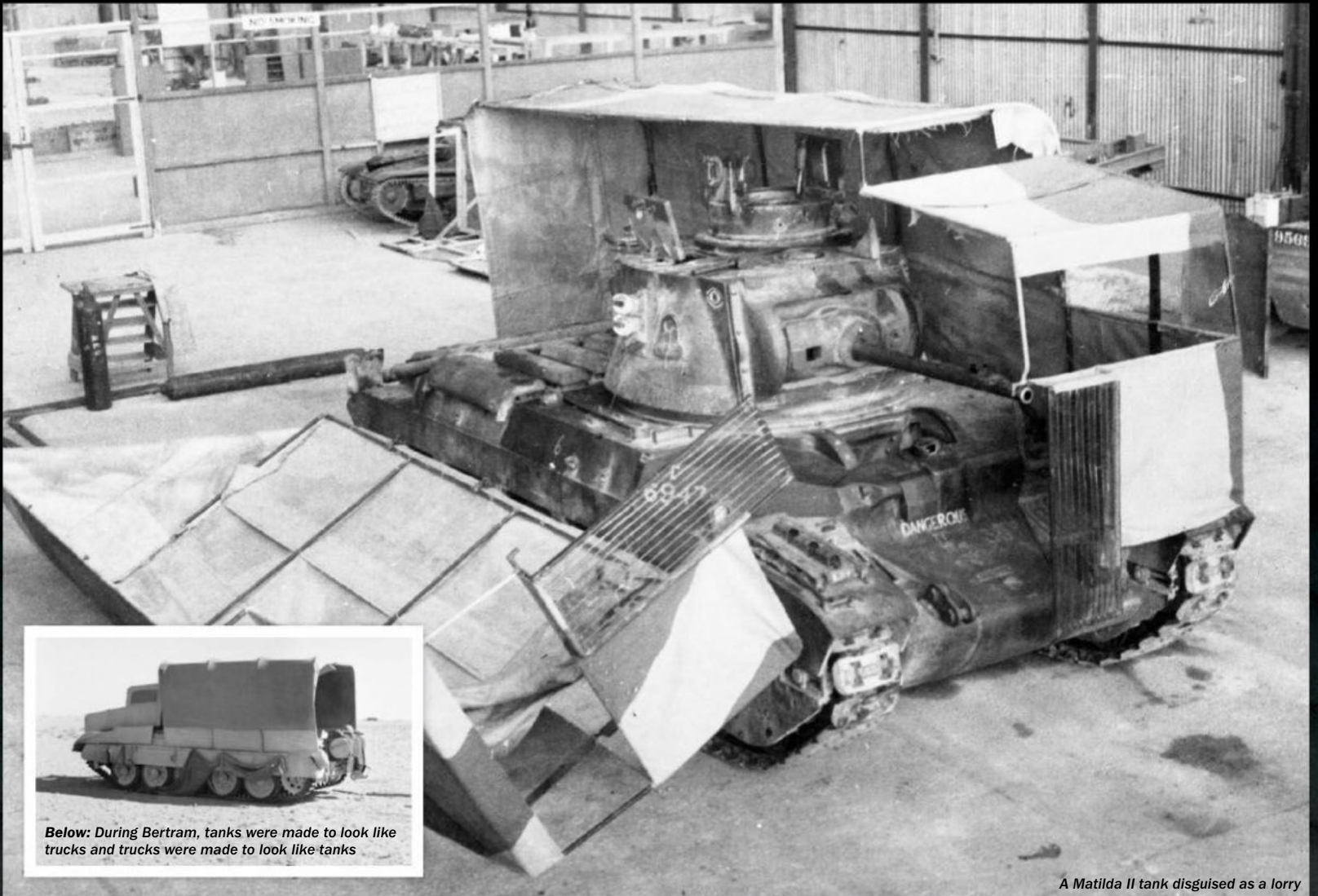
Montgomery was not Churchill's first choice to command the Eighth Army – he had a reputation for being difficult to work with. Churchill later remarked about his famous general: "In defeat unbeatable, in victory unbearable." However, Montgomery was extremely confident and immediately set about reorganising the army and improving morale. When he was appointed, he found his troops "brave but baffled" after two years of gruelling stalemate and defeat. He now made it clear there would be no retreat from the El Alamein line, declaring to his men: "I want to impress on everyone that the bad times are over."

His strategy was relatively simple: to repulse Rommel's next attack and then go on the offensive. Part of his new strategy was to make himself visible to his troops and encourage them. He concluded that: "It seemed to me that the men needed not only a master but a mascot. I deliberately set about fulfilling this requirement." To this end, Montgomery visited

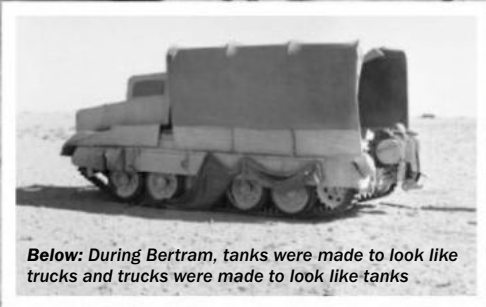
"THERE WAS NOW A REAL THREAT THAT EGYPT COULD FALL TO THE AXIS FORCES AND THE ENTIRE NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN WOULD BE LOST"

Scots Guards move forward under the cover of a smoke screen and protected by tanks





A Matilda II tank disguised as a lorry



Below: During Bertram, tanks were made to look like trucks and trucks were made to look like tanks

OPERATION BERTRAM

HOW MONTY'S ARMY OF ILLUSIONISTS FOOLED THE GERMANS AND SECURED VICTORY

When Winston Churchill announced the victory of El Alamein to the House of Commons, he stated: "By a marvellous system of camouflage, complete tactical surprise was achieved in the desert." What he was referring to was an ingenious part of Montgomery's battle plan: Operation Bertram.

Bertram was the largest visual deception campaign of the war. It was an elaborate manoeuvre of real and fake military equipment undertaken by the Camouflage Unit. Formed in 1940, the group consisted of civilian soldiers who were usually artists, sculptors, filmmakers, theatre designers and set painters. It even included the famous magician Jasper Maskelyne. The fake army was largely made out of string, canvas, straw and wood.

Disguised tanks were codenamed 'Sunshields' and disguised guns were known as 'Cannibals'. 722 Sunshields, 360 Cannibals and many more dummy tanks and transport vehicles were constructed in six weeks before the battle started. The tactics for Bertram involved hundreds of tanks

and artillery pieces being moved overnight into combat positions hidden under canvas covers that disguised them as harmless lorries. Decoys were left behind where the real tanks and guns had been. The dummy army was placed largely in the south of the El Alamein line in the weeks before the battle started. There was even a fake water pipeline, with gradual construction that crept southwards. The idea was to fool the German reconnaissance into reporting a large build-up of forces in the south while in reality the attack would be further north.

On the eve of the battle, the unit performed the biggest conjuring trick in history by making 600 tanks 'disappear' and then reappear 80 kilometres to the north disguised as trucks. After the battle, the captured General von Thoma, Rommel's second-in-command, confirmed to Montgomery that the Axis leaders were fooled by Bertram, expecting the attack to come from the south. They had been completely taken aback by the northern offensive. The deception had worked its magic.



Above: Jasper Maskelyne was a famous magician serving in the Camouflage Unit

"BERTRAM WAS THE LARGEST VISUAL DECEPTION CAMPAIGN OF THE WAR. IT WAS AN ELABORATE MANOEUVRE OF REAL AND FAKE MILITARY EQUIPMENT UNDERTAKEN BY THE CAMOUFLAGE UNIT"

Great Battles

SECOND BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN

23 OCTOBER - 11 NOVEMBER 1942



01 OPERATION LIGHTFOOT

The battle begins on the night of 23-24 October with an Allied offensive consisting of a powerful artillery bombardment. Afterwards, British infantry units open paths in the minefield to allow the armoured divisions to pass through.

02 THE ALLIES GET STUCK

Around 4am on 24 October, dust clouds, hidden mines and fierce Italian resistance slow down the Allied tanks in the minefield. By dawn, many of the minefields have not been cleared, disrupting Montgomery's battle plans.

04 ROMMEL TAKES CHARGE

Rommel returns to North Africa after a medical absence. He immediately orders a counterattack on 26 October in the north battle sector. The Australians take the brunt of the assault. In the south, the British fail to take advantage of Rommel's diverted panzers and are stalled by anti-tank fire.

05 FIGHTING AT KIDNEY AND SNIPE

On 26 October, there is fierce fighting at the Snipe, an area of Axis resistance south west of a feature called the Kidney. The Rifle Brigade bravely holds its ground against Rommel's tank regiments. Eventually both sides withdraw from the Snipe in error, believing the other to be near victory.

03 THE 'CRUMBLING'

Between 24 and 25 October, Montgomery pushes forward to scatter Axis forces using heavy bombardment and breaking up their divisions. Panzers attack the 51st Highland Division but are halted. The Desert Air Force makes more than 1,000 sorties. However, brutal infantry and tank battles plus continuing problems with mines slow the Allies' progress.

06 THE TIDE SLOWLY TURNS

Rommel loses the initiative when a panzer attack fails to break the Allies. The Australian Ninth Division attacks north of the Snipe to drive the Axis from the coast. The heavy fighting here convinces Montgomery that Rommel expects him to fight in the north. Consequently, the Allies attack further south.

08 ROMMEL RETREATS

Realising the battle is lost, Rommel retreats west under severe bombardment leaving the Italians to hold the line while the Afrika Korps withdraws. The Italians fight bravely but many are killed or taken prisoner. The Egyptian border area is secured for the Allies and Rommel retreats into Libya.

07 OPERATION SUPERCHARGE 1-2 NOVEMBER

Rommel's fuel supply becomes critically low. Montgomery now launches Operation Supercharge, another aerial and artillery offensive designed to take the Axis base at Tel el Aqqaqir, five kilometres north west of the Kidney. The British Ninth Armoured Division is heavily mauled but inflicts great damage among the German tanks.



The Axis forces engaged at El Alamein lost 30 per cent of its starting strength



Erwin Rommel with his officers. By October 1942, the 'Desert Fox' had pushed the Allies across North Africa and far into Egypt

"NOW THAT HE WAS IN COMMAND, MONTGOMERY FELT IT WAS IMPERATIVE TO HAVE THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT BEFORE TAKING ON ROMMEL"

every unit possible, explained the situation to them and adopted the black beret of the Royal Tank Regiment – this had the dual effect of making him instantly recognisable and like one of the ordinary soldiers. Consequently, he became a popular commander, and his troops nicknamed him 'Monty'.

Now that he was in command, Montgomery felt it was imperative to have the maximum number of troops and equipment before taking on Rommel. This was at odds with Churchill, who wanted a quick attack before the end of September at the latest, but Montgomery remained insistent. Meanwhile, Rommel was having logistical problems. He was very short of fuel, largely thanks to the British attacking a German fleet of six tankers and ammunition ships. Four of the ships were sunk and two

did not reach the Afrika Korps on time. This meant that Rommel was lacking the resources to reach the Suez Canal and would be forced to rely on capturing British fuel dumps. Montgomery took this opportunity to bait Rommel into attempting to take the Alam Halfa ridge beyond the El Alamein line in September. Rommel obliged, and was eventually forced to withdraw after encountering problems with minefields and attacks from the air, as well as tanks from the ridge itself.

By now the Desert Fox was dangerously low on fuel. Axis ports on the Egyptian and Libyan coasts were under constant Allied air attacks and many German supplies had to come all the way from Tripoli more than 1,600 kilometres away. The stress of the campaign was making Rommel ill, and he left to recuperate

in Germany on 23 September, leaving strict instructions to strengthen the minefields that covered his positions.

The mines that the Germans laid would become a considerable problem to the Allies – approximately 3 million mines were placed directly in front of the El Alamein line, as well as large entanglements of barbed wire. Montgomery could have no hope of outflanking what became known as the 'Devil's Garden' and made preparations for a full-frontal assault over the next month.

Opening shots

By late October, the Eighth Army numbered nearly 200,000 men, including great numbers of soldiers from India, New Zealand, South Africa and, most significantly, Australia. The forthcoming battle was arguably to be the last great pitched fight of the British Empire. In addition to the imperial divisions, there were Free French, Polish and Greek brigades on the Allied side. Montgomery was also well equipped, with more than 1,000 tanks, 900 artillery pieces and 1,400 anti-tank guns.





Though they fought bravely, tens of thousands of Italian soldiers were taken prisoner during and after the battle

The Axis forces looked small by comparison. They had approximately 116,000 German and Italian soldiers, 540 tanks, 500 artillery pieces and 490 anti-tank guns. Montgomery had good reason to feel confident, and made a rousing speech to his men: "Every soldier must know, before he goes into battle, how the little battle he is to fight fits into the larger picture, and how the success of his fighting will influence the battle as a whole." This personal touch raised the Eighth Army's morale to a level not seen for a long time. Nevertheless, the coming clash would be no walk in the park, and the Axis forces would show they were a dangerous foe.

On the night of 23-24 October, the Second Battle of El Alamein began with a huge Allied artillery barrage that lasted for more than five hours, first with a general heavy bombardment and then a more systematic shelling of targets. This first phase of the battle was codenamed 'Operation Lightfoot', and its intention was to distract Rommel's troops while Allied infantry and engineers of XXX Corps worked their way through the minefield. They were attempting to create two channels for the British armoured

"HE CONCLUDED THAT THE ONLY OPTION WAS TO IMMEDIATELY COUNTERATTACK WHILE HE STILL COULD"

divisions to advance through. It was a painstaking, hazardous process that involved clearing eight kilometres of mines, but was necessary as it meant that many of the mines would not be tripped by the walking troops – hence the name Operation Lightfoot.

At about 4am on 24 October, the armoured X Corps began to enter the middle of the minefield. However, they became hampered by traffic jams, dust clouds created by their own vehicle tracks and many remaining mines. The forward infantry were also under a determined attack by the Ariete, Brescia and Folgore Italian brigades. Many of the British tanks suffered punishing losses from anti-tank guns and none of the Allies' original objectives were met.

Ignoring the setbacks, Montgomery held his nerve and commenced the next stage of his attack. After surveying the situation at dawn on 24 October, he ordered the minefield

paths to be fully cleared before starting the 'Crumbling' of the Axis defences, which involved a continued heavy bombardment that was designed to break up the enemy divisions. At the same time, the Desert Air Force made more than 1,000 sorties against the Axis forces. A unit of Panzer tanks tried to attack the 51st Highland Division of infantry but were halted. The Afrika Korps also suffered the loss of Commander Georg Stumme when he died of a heart attack en route to assessing the battlefield situation and had to be replaced by General Wilhelm von Thoma.

The Allies were also suffering, as there had been little progress made throughout 24-25 October against intense tank battles and continuing problems with mines, which were still disabling armoured units. In the heat of this deadlock, Rommel returned to North Africa and assessed the situation. Thanks to



British armoured units drive through the Devil's Garden. The Axis minefield was a huge hindrance to the Allied advance

Montgomery's 'Crumbling' the Axis had taken heavy losses, with some Italian units taking 50 per cent casualties. In general, his troops were under strain and short on equipment, and the entire army had only a few days of fuel left. He concluded that the only option was to immediately counterattack while he still could, so struck north with Panzer and Italian divisions and forced an Australian battalion back.

By now much of the general fighting was taking place around a hilly feature called the 'Kidney', positioned at the far edge of the Axis minefield. If it could be successfully overrun,

then the Allies would be able to start a general advance. Rommel diverted many of his tanks north of the Kidney for the counterattack, but the British were unable to take advantage of this diversion and were stalled by anti-tank fire. Luckily for the Allies, that day the RAF sunk two German oil tankers at Tobruk, removing the last chance to refuel the Afrika Korps. This incident would hinder Rommel's chances of success.

'Operation Supercharge'

On 27 October, fierce fighting began south west of the Kidney in an area of resistance called the 'Snipe'. The British Rifle Brigade had captured the area and brought up 13 anti-tank guns to defend the position, so Rommel threw the 21st Panzer Division at it.

Despite being nearly overrun, the riflemen held their ground, destroying many German and Italian tanks in the process. Eventually the panzers withdrew, but the British were also withdrawn without being replaced, leaving the Snipe unoccupied.

Despite this, and the continuing ferocity of the fighting, the tide was now beginning to slowly turn in the Allies' favour. Between 28 October and 1 November, Montgomery's superiority in men and equipment began to pay dividends. For instance, two panzer divisions combined to make a determined attack on 28

October but were eventually driven back by sustained fire.

Rommel had by now lost the initiative, and from this point would continually be on the back foot in Africa. Montgomery ordered his units in the Snipe area to go on the defensive while he launched an attack further north. The Australian Ninth Division was ordered to attack German positions near the coastal area in order to force them south west. They reached some of their objectives, but encountered great resistance as Rommel threw in a large part of his army to block them.

In the end, the Australian operation was called off, but its actions were of great tactical use to Montgomery. He had observed that Rommel was committing reserves against the Australians, thereby indicating that he anticipated an Eighth Army offensive in the north. It was decided to launch the new offensive further south. Monty ordered the Australians to re-launch their attack, to distract Rommel while the rest of the Eighth Army regrouped. When the Australians restarted their assault, the Axis counterattack resulted in bloody, hand-to-hand fighting, draining Rommel's resources further. On 2 November, Montgomery launched 'Operation Supercharge'.

Supercharge's aim was to force the enemy out of the minefield and into open ground, destroy

A German artillery piece captured by Allied troops



THE DESERT SHERMAN

THIS AMERICAN TANK WON ITS COMBAT SPURS FIGHTING FOR THE BRITISH AT EL ALAMEIN

Winston Churchill first heard about the fall of Tobruk in the presence of President Roosevelt at the White House. He later remarked: "I did not attempt to hide from the president the shock I received." Roosevelt immediately offered to supply the latest American tanks

for the Eighth Army, which included the M4 Sherman tank. Named after an American Civil War general, the Sherman was designed and built in the USA, going into production in autumn 1941. However, it would be the British who would first use it in active combat.

"DURING THE WAR, 8,500 PANZERS WERE BUILT COMPARED TO 49,200 SHERMANS. THE NUMERICAL PRODUCTION SUPERIORITY OF THE SHERMAN WAS REFLECTED ON THE BATTLEFIELD"

The Sherman was designed for speed and mobility, limiting the thickness of its armour and the size of its main gun, which was a short-barrelled, low-velocity 75mm cannon. This compromised the tank's firepower and survivability. Germans nicknamed them 'Tommy Cookers' as they gained a reputation for easily catching fire.

To compensate, the Sherman could fire faster than German Panzer IV tanks and required less fuel. However the Panzers enjoyed considerable superiority to the Sherman in that they had thicker armour and a greater firing range and accuracy.

The tank's most valuable asset was that it was cheaper and easier to build than a panzer. During the war, 8,500 panzers were built compared with 49,200 Shermans. The numerical production superiority of the Sherman was reflected on the battlefield. At El Alamein, Rommel had 540 tanks compared with Montgomery's more than 1,000 tanks, 300 of which were Shermans.

These 300 tanks formed the core of the Eighth Army's armoured units, especially the First Armoured Division. Montgomery had delayed starting the battle partially so the Shermans could be safely delivered. Although it had design flaws, a Sherman could shell a Panzer at 2,000 metres, which was an improvement on British tanks. The British victory ensured that the Sherman remained a ubiquitous presence in Allied armies.

Sherman tanks of the Eighth Army move across the desert at speed



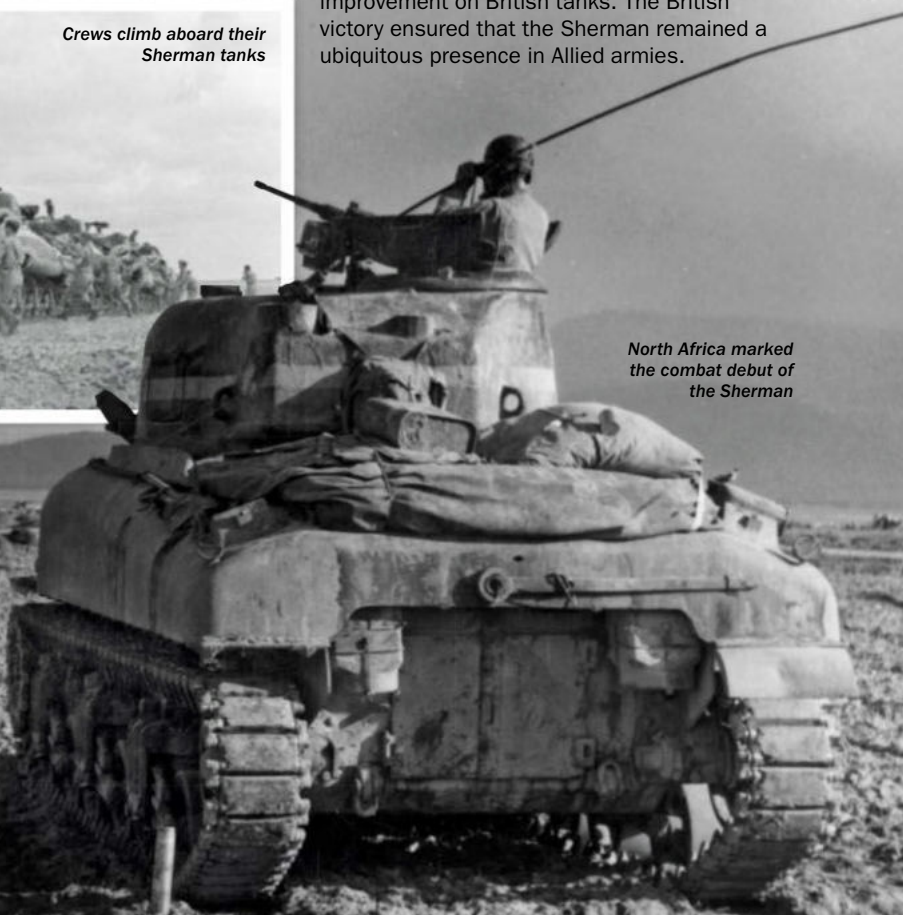
The Sherman's 75mm gun shot a shell that could penetrate a Panzer at 1,000 metres



Crews climb aboard their Sherman tanks



North Africa marked the combat debut of the Sherman





its armour, whittle down its fuel supplies even further and take Rommel's defence base at Tel el Aqqaqir, which was three miles north west of the Kidney.

If anything, the Allied aerial, armoured and artillery firepower were more intense than during Operation Lightfoot. Tel el Aqqaqir was bombed from the air for seven hours before four hours of artillery fire. Afterwards, led by New Zealand infantry, Allied tanks advanced towards the German positions and received a hammering from Axis anti-tank guns and panzers. The Ninth Armoured Division suffered particularly, losing 75 per cent of their tanks. At the same time, Axis counterattacks failed when the First Armoured Division joined the remains of the Ninth Armoured Division and the Afrika Korps were reduced to 35 tanks by the end of 2 November. This fighting became known as the 'Hammering of the Panzers'. On the same day, the Allies finally took the Snipe, and Montgomery made preparations for the final push.

The Desert Fox withdraws

Rommel concluded that the battle was lost and decided to save what he could of his army, despite receiving an order to fight to the end from Hitler. He began a gradual withdrawal, with the Italians doing most of the fighting. On 4 November, the Allies broke out into

open desert and punched a hole in Rommel's lines that was 19 kilometres long. The Desert Fox was left with no choice but to order a retreat west. The Italians fought bravely under the circumstances, with the 40th Bologna Regiment not surrendering until they were virtually out of ammunition. Along the hole in the Axis lines, the Allies were attacked by Italian troops. At the same time the vast majority were taken prisoner with some Italian divisions being wiped out entirely.

The Allies pursued Rommel's retreating force for days, attempting to encircle and trap it particularly at Mersa Matruh and Sidi Barrani. These attempts failed, but by 11 November, all Axis troops had been chased out of Egypt. At this point Montgomery halted his infantry, only allowing some armoured and artillery units to carry on the pursuit in Libya. He wanted to regroup and reinforce his supplies before pushing further forward. Rommel lived to fight another day, but the Afrika Korps was now a hunted army.

The Second Battle of El Alamein was over. At a cost of 13,500 Allied casualties, Montgomery had won a decisive victory that changed the course of the Western War. Rommel's force had suffered badly, losing approximately 37,000 troops, totalling 30 per cent of all Axis forces engaged – they were losses he could ill afford. His army on the Libyan-Egyptian border now only consisted of 5,000 men, 20 tanks and 50 guns. A combined Anglo-American force had also landed at Morocco on 8 November and had Montgomery followed up his pursuit, the Afrika Korps might have been neutralised by the end of 1942.

However, this is not to denigrate the achievement of El Alamein. For the first time since the war began, the British

Army had won a decisive battle against the Axis forces, restoring its martial reputation in the process. Montgomery turned into an overnight hero and would spend the rest of the war at the highest echelons of Allied command, much to the discomfort of some American commanders.

In many ways the true significance of El Alamein was psychological. It is true that the reality was a hard-fought success. The main factors that ensured victory were Montgomery's superior manpower, intelligence and equipment supplies combined with Rommel's numerical inferiority and woeful fuel situation. Had Rommel been better supplied, the final outcome might have been quite different. Some of the most significant actions took place away from the battlefield, such as Rommel's initial absence and the sinking of crucial German oil tankers by the RAF.

Nonetheless, British morale was boosted to a level yet unseen and Churchill ordered church bells to be rung across the country in celebration – many for the first time since 1939. El Alamein also proved to the occasionally sceptical Americans that British and imperial troops were more than capable of defeating Axis armies. By coincidence, the battle was the last time the British fought a large engagement without US co-operation.

For the remainder of 1942, the Afrika Korps was relentlessly chased across Libya, Algeria and Tunisia until they were eventually driven out of North Africa in 1943. This allowed the Allies to invade Sicily, and Italy and provided essential strategic security for preparations to invade France in 1944.

Once the war was over, El Alamein came to be seen as one of the most decisive turning points in the conflict. As Churchill once famously said: "Before Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein we never had a defeat."

Bernard Montgomery watches his tanks move during the battle. 'Monty' reinvigorated the Eighth Army and reorganised its fighting capability



A British soldier gives a 'V for victory' sign to German prisoners captured at El Alamein



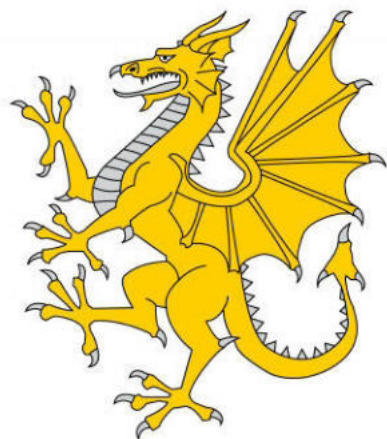
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Owain Glyndwr was the legendary last native Prince of Wales who led a rebellion against Henry IV for Welsh independence

THE WELSH BRAVEHEART

The last native prince of Wales, Owain Glyndwr, fought a Medieval guerilla war for Welsh independence... and almost succeeded

WORDS TOM GARNER

Owain Glyndwr is the national hero of Wales. In the early 15th century, he led the last serious rebellion against English rule for Welsh independence, fighting a largely guerrilla war that depended on attacking castles and deliberately avoiding the English in open battle. Nonetheless, Glyndwr fought and won several pitched battles that secured his place in Welsh history. His proud defiance caused severe economic and political problems for King Henry IV that blighted most of his reign. Eventually, the revolt would be suppressed, but like William Wallace in Scotland, the memory of Glyndwr's spirit of Celtic independence made him a national icon, which continues to the present day.

War of cultures

Wales had been under English control since 1283, when Edward I systematically conquered the country and displaced the native princes. To secure his conquest, Edward declared his own son and heir to be the prince of Wales and built formidable castles, particularly in the north of the country. These fortresses were a powerful symbol of English dominance in a conquered Wales, and in the following century, Englishmen and their families were encouraged to settle there to cement English dominance, much like the Ulster plantations in the 17th century. Powerful 'Marcher' lords, the descendents of Anglo-Norman aristocrats, supported the settlements. They held lands on the Welsh border and asserted an authority that was semi-independent to the English crown. One of these Marcher lords, Baron Grey of Ruthin, would

inadvertently spark the revolt that threatened to destabilise not just Wales but England too.

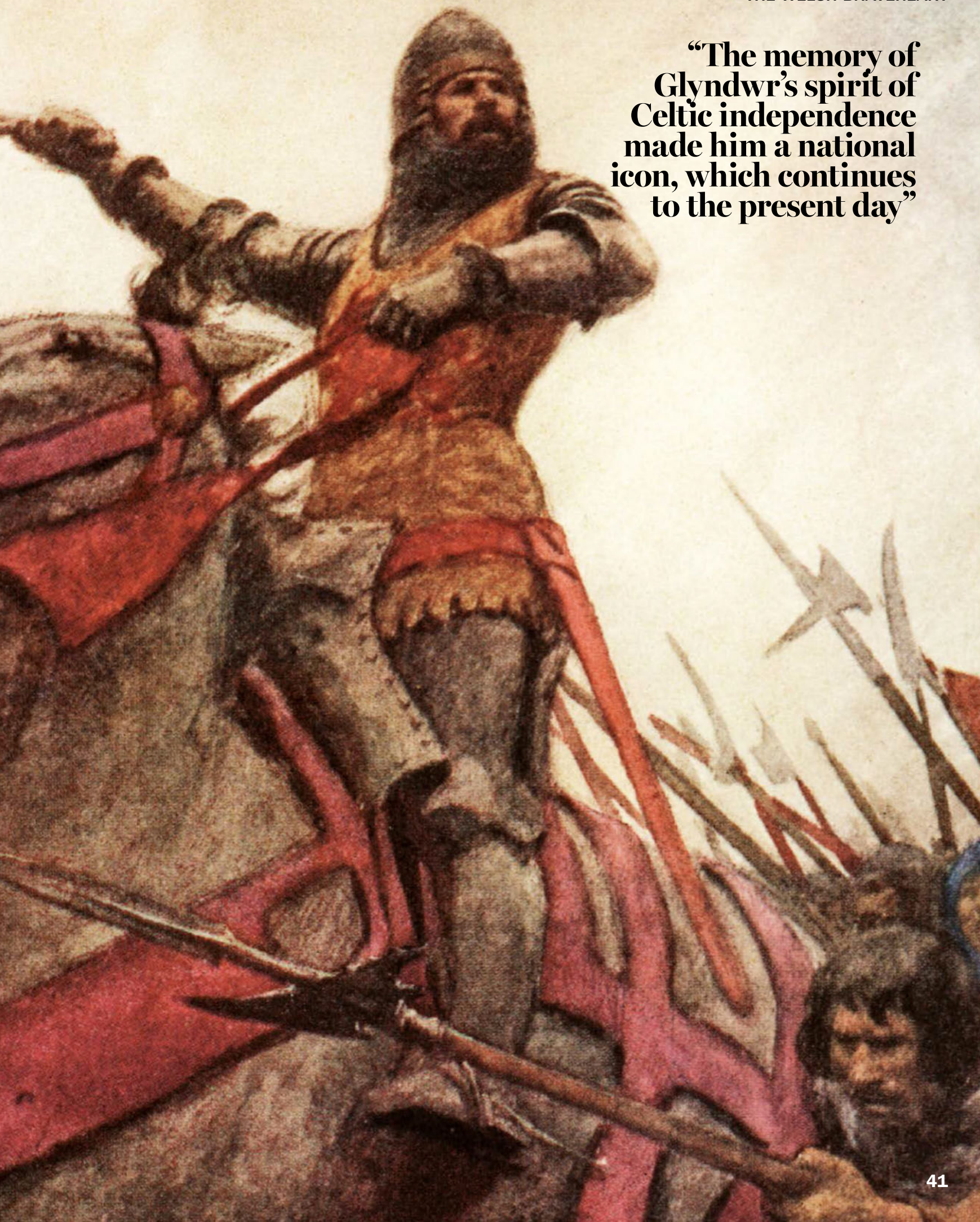
By 1400, many Welsh people had become deeply resentful of the English occupation. The new settlements meant that the Welsh were economically and racially discriminated against and were denied key appointments in the church and government. They were also more highly taxed than their English counterparts, yet the revolt was started by one of the few Welshmen who had actually benefited from English rule.

Owain Glyndwr was middle-aged in 1400, having possibly been born in 1359, and was a prominent member of the Welsh nobility. His direct ancestry included the princes of Powys and Deheubarth, both of whom had lineages to the House of Gwynedd. This dynasty had produced the original princes of Wales, and claimed to be descended from legendary British kings. Glyndwr's great-grandfather was one of the few princely survivors of the 1282-83 Conquest, and as such he was the most prominent native Welsh nobleman.

As befitting his noble rank, Glyndwr had studied law in London, and at this time was loyal to the English crown, performing military service in Scotland in 1384 and at Sluys in 1387. However, in 1400 he entered into a bitter land dispute with his neighbour, Baron Grey of Ruthin. When the case was delivered to parliament, Glyndwr faced discrimination because he was of Welsh nationality, and then Grey tried to accuse Glyndwr of treason. What happened next is uncertain, but on 16 September 1400, there was an assembly of Welshmen at Glyndyfrdwy, which included



**“The memory of
Glyndwr’s spirit of
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to the present day”**



many of Glyndwr's relatives as well as Welsh churchmen. They issued a declaration that "elevated Owain" as prince of Wales and called for the death of Henry IV and the obliteration of the English language.

This was not a random coincidence – Henry IV had only recently usurped the throne from Richard II and declared his eldest son Henry to be prince of Wales. As usurpation was considered a grave sin, the Welsh refused to recognise the young Henry as their prince. On 16 September 1400, Glyndwr used this transformed situation to descend "in warlike fashion" to burn his enemy Grey's estates at Ruthin with 270 men. Afterwards, the 'English' towns of Denbigh, Rhuddlan, Flint, Hawarden, Holt, Oswestry and Welshpool were attacked. The rebellion had begun.

Mab Darogan rises

Sources for the revolt are scanty, and much of what happened is disputed. Nevertheless, it became an economic, military and political nightmare for Henry IV. In the aftermath of Glyndwr's initial attacks, Henry ordered levies in the Midland and Border counties. An English commander called Hugh Burnell defeated the rebels and Glyndwr "escaped into the woods". The king then toured northern Wales with his troops, mistakenly thinking the attacks were a minor disturbance. In early 1401, English chroniclers felt confident enough to report: "The country of North Wales was well obedient." However, the revolt quickly resurfaced when Conwy Castle was dramatically captured by the Tudur brothers from Anglesey and held for eight weeks. This was soon followed by Glyndwr's first victory, in a battle at Mynydd Hyddgen in June 1401.

This clash took place in a valley in the Cambrian Mountains and began when a large force of 1,500 English and Flemish soldiers

from Pembrokeshire attacked Glyndwr's army, which was encamped at the bottom of the Hyddgen Valley. Henry IV had given orders to quash the growing rebellion while Glyndwr had been marching southwards with a small force of 120 mounted troops – aiming to pursue a guerrilla war in English-controlled southern Wales. The only account of this battle was written in the 16th century, in *Annals Of Owain Glyndwr*, and it states: "No sooner did the English troops turn their backs in flight than 200 of them were slain. Owain won great fame, and a great number of youths and fighting men from every part of Wales rose and joined him, until he had a great host at his back."

Though it's uncertain how the Welsh defeated the much larger English force, it was likely a case of speed over strength. The Welsh were lightly armed and mobile and were equipped with longbows (which were Welsh in origin), so it is probable that they simply outmanoeuvred the more heavily armoured English. What is certain is that Glyndwr had now become the leader of a national movement.

The victory at Mynydd Hyddgen was followed by a symbolic moment at the Battle of Tuthill on 2 November 1401. Tuthill was a high position overlooking Caernarfon Castle, the headquarters of English domination in northern Wales. The encounter is most famous as the first occasion when Glyndwr unfurled a flag bearing a golden dragon on a white field. This recalled the symbolism of the legendary Uther Pendragon, and Glyndwr deliberately drew comparisons between his revolt and Welsh political mythology. By invoking Arthurian legend, Glyndwr was presented as 'Mab Darogan' (the 'Chosen Son') who would free the Britons of Wales from the subjugation of the Anglo-Saxons. There are few details of the battle itself, but it is believed that the fight ended inconclusively with an estimated 300

"What is certain is that Glyndwr had now become the leader of a national movement"

Welshmen dead. However, the Battle of Tuthill demonstrated the isolation of Caernarfon and Glyndwr's ability to attack English positions in Wales with impunity.

After Tuthill, Glyndwr began to seek external alliances and addressed letters in French to the king of Scotland and also correspondences in Latin to the Gaelic lords in Ireland. His rising prominence gained further currency when he won the greatest clash of the revolt at Bryn Glas.

This battle was fought on 22 June 1402 near the towns of Knighton and Prestaigne in Powys. The English, under the command of Sir Edmund Mortimer, numbered some 2-4,000 men, while the Welsh had approximately 1,500 men. Mortimer's force also had a considerable number of Welshmen from Maelienydd, and these troops would play an important part in the outcome of the battle.

Mortimer's men advanced on Glyndwr's force, which was occupying a hilltop position. The smaller Welsh army was divided into two sections: one on the crest of the hill to encourage Mortimer's men to attack, and the other decamped in a hidden valley alongside the hill. As Mortimer's army advanced up the slope, Glyndwr's longbowmen fired downhill with deadly effect, and although Mortimer's

THE MILITARY APPRENTICESHIP OF HENRY V

THE VICTOR OF AGINCOURT RECEIVED HIS MILITARY EDUCATION AT THE HANDS OF GLYNDWR

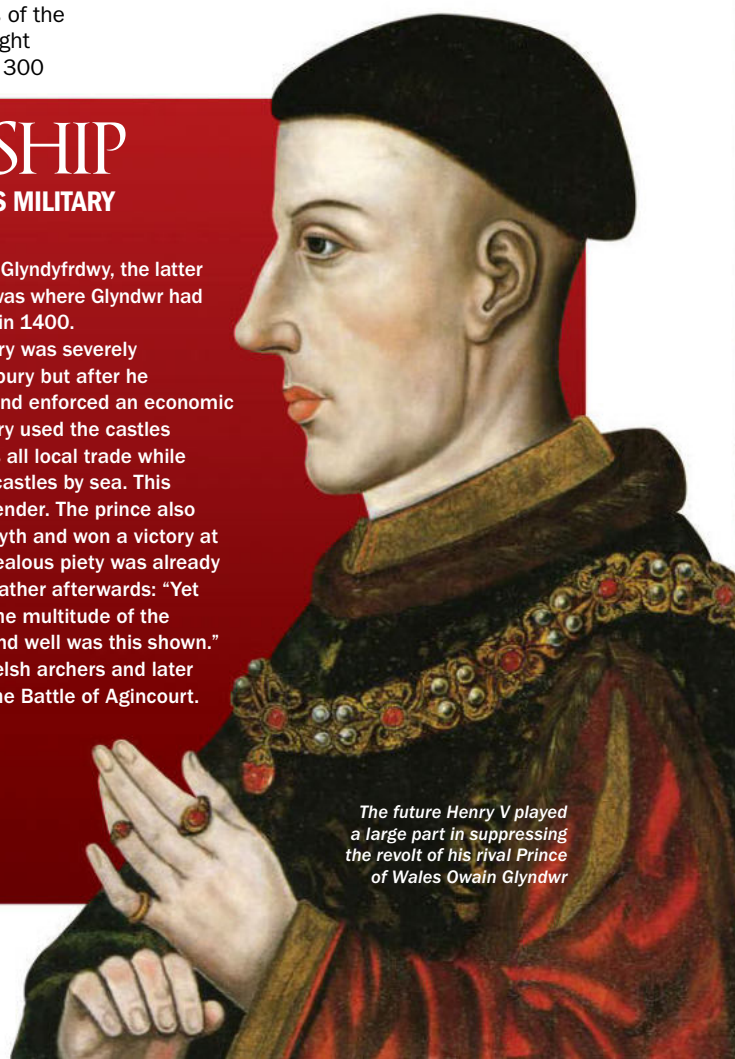
The future warrior king spent his teenage years engaged in suppressing Glyndwr's revolt. He was Welsh-born himself and during his childhood was known as 'Henry of Monmouth' but his relative obscurity ended when his father usurped Richard II and became Henry IV. At the king's coronation, young Henry was quickly proclaimed as prince of Wales. The usurpation was an important factor that fuelled the revolt's momentum as many Welshmen could not accept the son of a usurper as their prince and preferred the native lineage of Glyndwr.

In 1403, at the age of 16, Prince Henry was appointed as his father's royal deputy in Wales and was in charge of suppressing the rebellion. The prince was determined to take the fight to Glyndwr, as he would have been aware of his own precarious right to the principality. Using his own funds, he gathered a force of four barons, 20 knights, 500 men-at-arms and 2,500 archers. He proceeded to burn

Glyndwr's homes at Sycharth and Glyndyfrdwy, the latter being particularly symbolic, as it was where Glyndwr had been proclaimed Prince of Wales in 1400.

Shortly afterwards, Prince Henry was severely wounded at the Battle of Shrewsbury but after he recovered he returned to Wales and enforced an economic blockade on Glyndwr. Prince Henry used the castles under English control to suppress all local trade while simultaneously re-supplying the castles by sea. This tactic forced many rebels to surrender. The prince also supervised the siege of Aberystwyth and won a victory at Grosmont in 1405. His famous zealous piety was already evident when he reported to his father afterwards: "Yet it is known that victory is not in the multitude of the people but in the power of God and well was this shown." However, Henry respected the Welsh archers and later used many of them to help win the Battle of Agincourt.

"In 1403, at the age of 16, Prince Henry was appointed as his father's royal deputy in Wales"



The future Henry V played a large part in suppressing the revolt of his rival Prince of Wales Owain Glyndwr

WALES AT WAR

THE WELSH BRAVEHEART

1404: BEAUMARIS

Edward I's mighty fortress on Anglesey falls to the Welsh in August. It is retaken in June 1405 when English ships sent from Dublin attack the island. The rebels escape to Snowdonia.

ANGLESEY

LINCOLN

FLINT

1401: CONWY

On 1 April the brothers Rhys and Gwilym ap Tudur capture Conwy by disguising themselves as carpenters and killing the watchmen. They hold the castle for three months before negotiating terms of surrender.

CAERNARVON

1400: DENBIGH

Glyndwr begins his revolt by besieging Denbigh, but despite repeated attempts, fails to take the castle.



FITZALAN

1403: CAERNARFON

The seat of English authority in North Wales holds out for months against two sustained attacks by Welsh forces with a garrison of just 37 archers.

MERIONETH

1409: HARLECH

Glyndwr's final castle and seat of power is retaken. The last native Prince of Wales becomes a fugitive and the back of the rebellion is broken.

POOLE

CORBET



CASTLES SACKED OR DESTROYED BY GLYNDWR



CASTLES HELD BY OWAIN GLYNDWR



CASTLES HELD OR RESISTED BY ENGLISH

1404: CRICCIETH

Criccieth is captured and nearly razed to the ground except for its Gatehouse and sections of the wall. The efforts of the burning remain visible today.

1404: ABERYSTWYTH

Glyndwr holds this castle as one of his principal fortresses for four years until it is re-taken by Prince Henry in 1408.



MONTGOMERY

1405: GROSMONT

8,000 Welsh rebels attack the castle in March 1405. The army includes Gruffudd, the son of Owain Glyndwr and is commanded by Rhys Gethin, one of the victors at Bryn Glas. Prince Henry leads a relief force from Hereford and in the ensuing battle between 800-1,000 Welshmen are killed.



1403: NEWCASTLE EMLYN

The castle is captured by Glyndwr but then recaptured by Sir Thomas Carew in the same year.



CARDIGAN

MORTIMER

CARDIGAN

CARMARTHEN

MARSHALL

PICTON

1403: KIDWELLY

The town of Kidwelly falls to the rebels but the castle holds out in a siege that lasts all winter. The old town never recovered from the attack and was described as "waste and desolate" in 1444.



CARMARTHEN

LLANDOVERY

1404: CARDIFF

Glyndwr's forces attack the castle in the future capital of Wales but it remains un-captured. However its Black Tower and southern Gatehouse are badly damaged.

1405: USK

Glyndwr burns the town but the castle holds out. Later, the Welsh are seriously defeated near Usk at Pwll Melyn. Prince Henry has 300 prisoners beheaded afterwards in front of the castle.

CLARE

1404: LLANTRISANT

Glyndwr's men demolish the castle, causing families from 60 homes in the town to flee.

**“The corpses were left lying
under their horses’ hooves,
weltering in their own blood, as
burial was forbidden for a long
time afterwards”**



*Glyndwr almost won
his battle for Welsh
independence, and
many English supporters
changed allegiance*

army also had longbows, they were less effective when fired uphill. When the two armies engaged in battle on the hill, Glyndwr's men concealed in the valley attacked Mortimer on the right flank and rear. During the bloody battle that followed, some of the Welsh bowmen in Mortimer's army defected to Glyndwr and fired on their former comrades. This turned the tide and saw the English routed, Mortimer captured and between 200-1,100 Englishmen killed.

Chroniclers described how, "The corpses were left lying under their horses' hooves, weltering in their own blood, as burial was forbidden for a long time afterwards." Welsh women reputedly mutilated the English corpses in what would prove to be the most significant moment of the revolt.

Mortimer's family were prominent Marcher lords who had a greater claim to the English throne than Henry IV, so the English government procrastinated over Mortimer's ransom. This led Mortimer to defect to Glyndwr, and he even married Glyndwr's daughter Catrin on 30 November 1402. This provided the Welsh revolt a much greater legitimacy and helped to destabilise English politics for several years after the matter.

Henry IV hits back

Bryn Glas shocked Henry IV, who decided to personally lead a new campaign into Wales. For the king, the revolt was becoming personal as his own estates were under threat. It has been calculated that the king and Prince Henry exercised lordship over half the surface area of Wales and could normally expect their Welsh estates to provide an annual income of £8,500 (almost £4 million in today's currency) and often much more. As the revolt spread, not only were these revenues lost, but additional funds had to be found to deal with the rebels. Henry IV's 1402 campaign after Bryn Glas planned to encircle the Welsh from the English headquarters at Shrewsbury, but it was thwarted by bad weather. The king himself almost died when his tent blew down in a storm and he was only saved from being crushed by his armour. Henry IV would personally lead six campaigns into Wales between 1400-05, but they were all to little effect and he would eventually leave the frustrations of endless campaigning to his son and the nobles.

Bryn Glas resulted in tighter English sanctions against the Welsh. When parliament assembled on 30 September 1402, it issued statutes prohibiting public assemblies, the bearing and importation of arms and the keeping of castles or holding office by Welshmen. Special mention was made to those allied or friendly to: "Owen ap Glendourdy, traitor to our sovereign lord and king." In fact, Glyndwr was not taken off a list of traitors until 1948.

In an attempt to regain the initiative, Prince Henry was appointed as royal lieutenant in Wales on 8 March 1403, but this did little to change the military situation. Throughout 1403 Glyndwr continued to raid and attack castles across Wales, including at Newcastle Emlyn, Llandovery and Kidwelly. At the same time his success was fermenting a civil war in England. The powerful Percy family, who had helped Henry IV during his usurpation, did not feel properly rewarded. He colluded

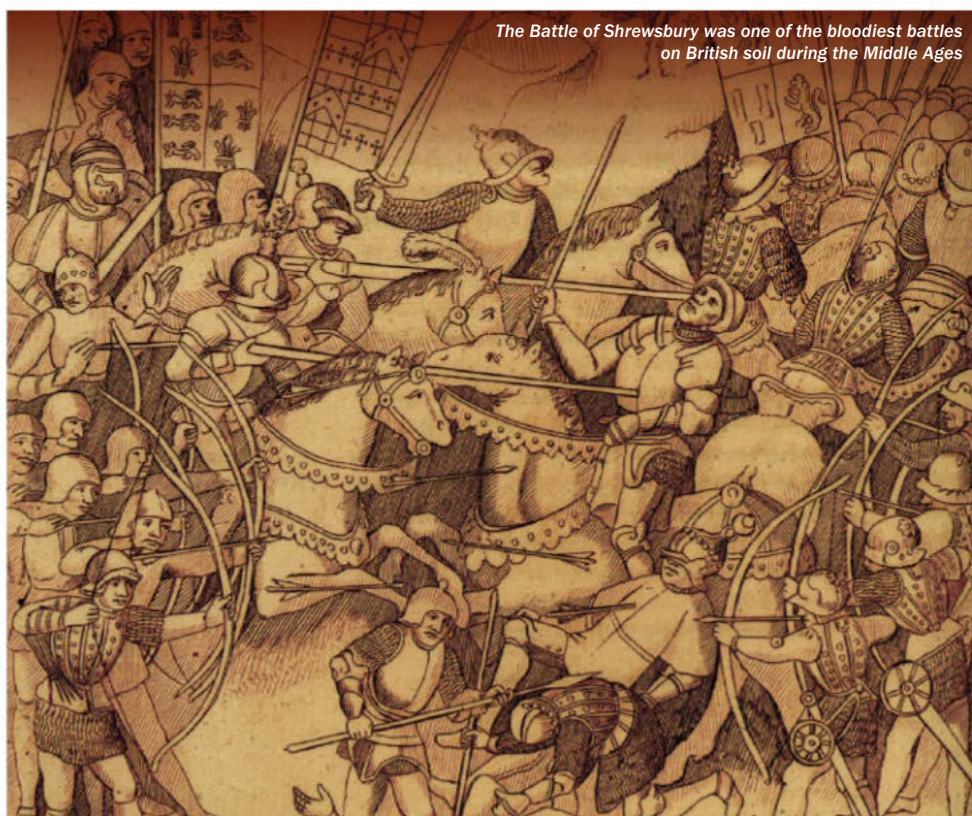
REBEL TUDORS

THE ORIGINS OF THE ROYAL DYNASTY WERE ROOTED IN REBELLION AND DECEPTION

In 1485, Henry VII became the first Welsh king of England, but 84 years previously, his ancestors played a dramatic part in Glyndwr's revolt. On April Fools' Day 1401, the brothers Rhys and Gwilym ap Tudur tricked their way into Conwy Castle while the garrison was at church, disguising themselves as carpenters as they passed through the Gatehouse. They then proceeded to slaughter

the guards, let in their own men and ransacked the castle and town. The brothers were among the few rebels who were later denied a pardon by the English and Rhys was brutally executed in 1412. The brothers' youngest sibling, Maredudd, was Henry VII's great-grandfather. Within four generations, the Tudors went from audacious insurgents to grand monarchs.

Ancestors of the future Henry VII captured Conwy Castle by surprise in 1401



The Battle of Shrewsbury was one of the bloodiest battles on British soil during the Middle Ages

“Special mention was made to those allied or friendly to: “Owen ap Glendourdy, traitor to our sovereign lord and king.” In fact, Glyndwr was not taken off a list of traitors until 1948”

with Mortimer and Glyndwr to raise an army to overthrow the king and replace him with Mortimer's nephew, the Earl of March, and to recognise Welsh independence. Henry IV fought and won a vicious battle at Shrewsbury on 21 July 1403 to prevent the Percys from linking up with Glyndwr, but still the revolt in Wales continued unabated.

After the Battle of Shrewsbury, the Welsh started to receive support from the French who appeared with a fleet off Kidwelly and Caernarfon at the end of 1403.

Eventually a formal treaty of alliance was signed between Glyndwr and Charles VI of France, who recognised his status as prince of Wales. Glyndwr would later write to Charles VI:

“Most serene prince, you have deemed it worthy... to learn how my nation, for many years now elapsed, has been oppressed by the fury of the barbarous Saxons; whence... it seemed reasonable with them to trample upon us... I pray and beseech your majesty to... extirpate and remove violence and oppression from my subjects, as you are well able to. Yours avowedly, Owain, Prince of Wales.”

This letter showed that Glyndwr saw himself and Wales as being worthy of recognition from the French king and he was getting close to his dream of independence.

1404 was the high point of the rebellion, with the mighty castles of Harlech and Aberystwyth being captured. Glyndwr held a parliament at Harlech and it became the headquarters and court of the rebellion. It was the nerve centre for Glyndwr's vision of a free principality with an independent Welsh church and plans for the establishment of two universities. The capture of the two castles also confirmed Glyndwr's influence over large swathes of western Wales and endowed him with key coastal fortresses. At this stage, the Welsh rebel army numbered about 8,000 or more men, who continued to attack castles in southern Wales, including Cardiff and a raid into Shropshire. The inhabitants of Shropshire complained about the destruction wrought by the rebels and concluded a truce with “the land of Wales”. Most

significantly, Glyndwr was crowned as prince of Wales at Machynlleth in 1404 – his defiance against the English crown was now cemented.

The end of the revolt

France now sent troops to support Glyndwr, that landed at Milford Haven in August 1405. A combined Franco-Welsh force then invaded England and encountered Henry IV's army two miles north of Worcester. However, there was no battle, and the Welsh eventually went home due to a lack of food. Nevertheless, Glyndwr's financial position remained healthy thanks to the seizure of the king's baggage train, which was loaded with provisions and jewels. Also, the rebels concluded a truce with the loyalist men of Pembrokeshire, which yielded up to £200 of silver.

1405 was also the year that the tide slowly began to turn in the English favour, starting with the Battle of Pwll Melyn on 5 May. The Welsh army, under the command of Glyndwr's son Gruffudd, attempted to capture Usk Castle but came up against a substantial English force that then proceeded to heavily defeat the Welsh. Sources are unclear, but it is usually said that the Welsh lost a huge number of men, among which was Glyndwr's brother Tudur, the renowned warrior Hopkins ap Tomos and John ap Hywel, an abbot who was the spiritual leader of the Welsh army.

Gruffudd was captured and imprisoned in the Tower of London. It is clear that the Welsh force was of considerable size and importance, as it contained key members of his family and entourage. Afterwards, 300 Welsh prisoners were beheaded by the English outside of the walls of Usk Castle, and this drastic measure showed that the English were determined to suppress the rebellion, as well as send a stern message to Glyndwr. It is possible that the Welsh unwillingness to fight the English outside of Worcester stemmed from the defeat at Pwll Melyn. From this point onwards, the revolt began to peter out from a national perspective and Glyndwr was increasingly on the back foot.

There were several reasons for the eventual Welsh defeat. Glyndwr never had the universal support of his people, and although he attracted followers from prominent families, this was countered by other respectable dynasties and townsmen who were pro-English. Additionally, most Welsh attacks were little more than a show of strength, as they could not commit large numbers of troops for campaigns.

For their part, the English benefited from dominance of the sea and the fact that many of the English-built castles, with the exception of Aberystwyth and Harlech, often stood firm against Glyndwr. Southern Wales and the border areas were used as headquarters from which to mount offensive sallies against the rebels. The English also reorganised their Exchequer to keep war finances steady and made their supply routes more secure. French support for Glyndwr also began to fade after Henry IV negotiated a truce with Charles VI.

In 1406, the regions of Gower, Ystrad Tywi, Ceredigion and Anglesey all submitted to the English, and Prince Henry retook Aberystwyth in 1408. During the siege, cannons were used by the English in one of the first recorded instances of artillery fire in Britain. Harlech fell

Left: Erected in Corwen, North Wales, this bronze statue of Owain Glyndwr by Colin Spofforth calls him ‘The Foretold Son’

BATTLE OF SHREWSBURY

THIS BLOODY CLASH HAD A DIRECT BEARING ON THE COURSE OF GLYNDWR'S REVOLT

In 1403, a civil war briefly broke out in England. To keep his usurped throne, Henry IV heavily relied on the powerful Percy family who owned vast swathes of northern England. Sir Henry 'Hotspur' Percy fought several campaigns against Glyndwr between 1401-02. However when the king failed to pay him for his services, Hotspur changed sides and plotted to overthrow King Henry IV with the aid of Glyndwr and Sir Edmund Mortimer.

Hotspur assembled an army in Cheshire and planned to march towards Shrewsbury to link up with the Welsh and other rebels and then advance on London. However, Henry IV blocked his path outside Shrewsbury before the linkup could take place, and what followed was a bloodbath on 21 July.

For the first time, two armies of English longbowmen fired continuous volleys at each other. At first Hotspur's Cheshire archers inflicted great damage on the king's army. Prince Henry, who led the vanguard, was severely wounded when he was shot in the face by an arrow. He survived but it took him months to recover and he was permanently scarred. Hotspur then led a charge in an attempt to kill Henry IV but the king had placed several decoys dressed in his coat of arms and several were killed before Hotspur himself died. It is rumoured that an arrow killed him when he opened his visor. Upon his death, the rebel army fled. 5-6,000 men were dead and Glyndwr had lost a powerful English ally. Despite later Welsh victories, Glyndwr would eventually be forced to go on the defensive while both Henry IV and Prince Henry lived.

Right: The Battle of Shrewsbury saw the demise of Henry 'Hotspur' Percy



Images: Alamy; Jose Cabrera

the following year and Glyndwr's family were taken to the Tower of London. Nonetheless, pacification was by no means complete.

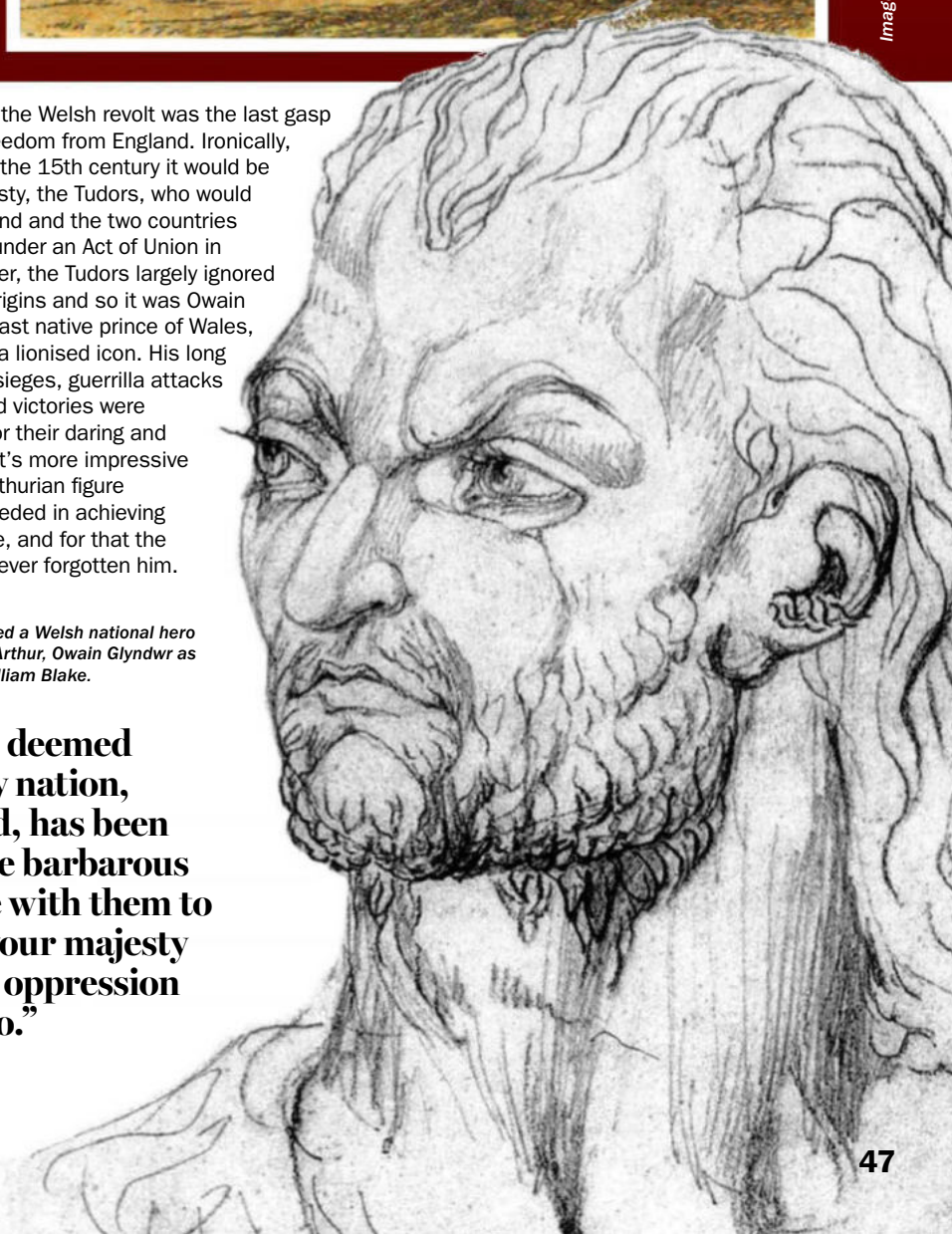
The Welsh lightning strikes and guerrilla tactics enabled them to resist a final defeat and in 1409 Glyndwr was reported to be devastating the countryside with a large band of followers. There was also another raid into Shropshire and in 1410, two Scottish merchants were imprisoned at Caernarfon on the accusation of attempting to aid Glyndwr. As late as 1415, Welsh rebels were reported as being active in Merionethshire but of Glyndwr himself there was now no trace. Henry IV died in 1413, exhausted by the stresses of his reign. Prince Henry succeeded as Henry V and began to issue pardons to former rebels and even to Glyndwr himself. But the old warrior reputedly refused all offers of clemency and disappeared. There is no record of his death or burial in existence, but it is thought that he died around the year 1415.

In the end, the Welsh revolt was the last gasp of genuine freedom from England. Ironically, by the end of the 15th century it would be a Welsh dynasty, the Tudors, who would reign in England and the two countries were unified under an Act of Union in 1536. However, the Tudors largely ignored their Welsh origins and so it was Owain Glyndwr, the last native prince of Wales, who became a lionised icon. His long campaign of sieges, guerrilla attacks and battlefield victories were remarkable for their daring and support. What's more impressive is that this Arthurian figure almost succeeded in achieving independence, and for that the Welsh have never forgotten him.

Right: Considered a Welsh national hero alongside King Arthur, Owain Glyndwr as portrayed by William Blake.

"Most serene prince, you have deemed it worthy... to learn how my nation, for many years now elapsed, has been oppressed by the fury of the barbarous Saxons; whence... it seemed reasonable with them to trample upon us... I pray and beseech your majesty to... extirpate and remove violence and oppression from my subjects, as you are well able to."


Owain, Prince of Wales





ESCAPE FROM COLDITZ

The Germans boasted that this foreboding fortress was escape proof, but for the prisoners of Oflag IV-C this was just another challenge



The 'Laufen Six' – the first British inmates at Colditz (including Pat Reid, third from left), who arrived in November 1940

Below: Colditz Castle was in the heart of Hitler's Reich, 650 kilometres from any frontier not under Nazi control

The men who found themselves at Colditz Castle, or Oflag IV-C, came from varied backgrounds and had vastly different experiences of the war, but they all had at least one thing in common: the Germans viewed them as troublemakers.

This may have been because of (often repeated) escape attempts from other prison camps, or political views that classified them as Deutschfeindlich (anti-German). Whatever the reason, they were sent to Colditz, a sonderlager, or high-security prison, where it was assumed that their war would be over.

There was one other factor linking the prisoners of Colditz: they were all officers. Under the terms of the 1929 Geneva Convention, captured officers could not be made to do work; other ranks could and so found themselves in stalags. Although an apparent perk of being an officer, the lack of work was one of the biggest problems faced by the men at Colditz.

Keeping themselves occupied, mentally and physically, was one of their prime concerns, and for most this was a problem that stretched out over years, because although the very name conjures images of daring escapes and intrepid adventures, very few inmates would ever escape from Colditz.

United nations

The first British prisoners, six officers who had previously escaped from Laufen prison camp in Bavaria, arrived at Colditz in November 1940. They were greeted by 140 Polish officers (who had already been there for a week) as well as a handful of Canadians.

The majority of inmates arrived that year, caught in the German Blitzkrieg that had opened the war, but throughout the conflict a trickle of new arrivals brought new faces, new nationalities and new ideas. It was the accepted duty of an officer to try to escape, and many of the men thought of little else.

Colditz had originally been an 11th-century fortress, but had been extended and modified extensively over the years, most notably on the orders of Augustus the Strong at the end of the 17th century. It was a complex warren of

staircases, corridors and rooms, which offered huge scope for the inmates to move around undetected, probing for weak spots.

The castle's vulnerability was that it had not been designed to keep people in, but rather to keep them out. It had only been adopted as a prison in 1933 (to lock up communists and other 'undesirables'), although it had previously been used as an insane asylum.

Life in Colditz could be stupefyingly dull, so much so that several inmates had nervous breakdowns or actually went insane after years of captivity. To pass the time, the men exercised in their small courtyard or in the more generous exercise area outside the castle walls. In August 1941, the prisoners staged their own 'Olympic Games' (the British forgot all about it and missed the opening ceremony, then failed to win a single medal). A theatre was also put to good use, with regular productions that even the Germans attended (often as bored as the inmates they were guarding).

Relations between the different nationalities could sometimes be strained. All tended to be united, however, in their love of teasing the guards. Known as 'goon-baiting', this took different forms, but was always intended to push the guards to the edge of their patience without actually provoking violence. The French used wit, the British favoured childish pranks (including water bombs), while the Poles displayed more open hostility, partly because the guards were more contemptuous of them as their country had officially disappeared following the German invasion.

Letters from home were a huge comfort for the men in Colditz, although they were often delivered many months after they had been sent (and these delays were sometimes intentional, as the Germans got their own back for the goon-baiting).

Also welcome were the regular Red Cross parcels. The food in these parcels became a



Above: Dutch POWs gather in the castle courtyard for a photo, March 1942.

literal lifeline for the prisoners as the rations provided by the Germans were appalling. Many of the men reckoned that they might actually have starved had they not received their weekly parcels, and preparing elaborate meals (within reason, of course) became a major preoccupation for the men.

The main way of passing the time, however, was the dreaming up and implementation of escape plans. These could be complex affairs or spur-of-the-moment attempts (known as 'snap escapes'). Focusing on escaping was thought to be so important that the wildly ambitious plan to build a working glider, late in the war, was given the green light as much to keep the men working happily as to provide a genuine means of escape. The glider was still awaiting its first flight when American soldiers arrived in April 1945.

Only 32 men escaped after being imprisoned in Colditz, and many of those made their bids for freedom when outside the castle for various reasons. Only 15 men are credited with full home runs – successful escapes that started within the castle itself or its grounds. Colditz, for the most part, lived up to its reputation.

"IT WAS A COMPLEX WARREN OF STAIRCASES, CORRIDORS AND ROOMS, WHICH OFFERED HUGE SCOPE FOR THE INMATES TO MOVE AROUND UNDETECTED, PROBING FOR WEAK SPOTS"

Below: Ranking POWs of Yugoslav, Belgian, Polish (navy and army), British, French and Dutch armies, 1941.



Below: The 'Colditz Cock' was destroyed after the war, but a replica makes it clear how ambitious an undertaking this escape plan was



AN OFFICER'S DUTY

ANY CAPTURED OFFICER FELT IT WAS THEIR DUTY TO TRY AND ESCAPE – BUT ONLY A SELECT FEW ATTEMPTS WOULD SUCCEED

A THE HONEST GUARD FAILURE

NOT EVEN BRIBERY COULD ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL ESCAPE FROM COLDITZ

Of all the methods of escape, a tunnel is perhaps the most iconic, but the inmates at Colditz had uniformly bad luck when trying to dig their way to freedom. Before he was made 'escape officer' for the British, Pat Reid was part of an audacious plan to tunnel out of the canteen. It was to be a mass breakout, with 12 men ready to run for it – eight Brits and four Poles. Three months of hard work and meticulous preparation saw the men poised for their attempt on the night of 29 May 1941. Paperwork, disguises and maps were manufactured for the men, but the entire plan rested on the ability to bribe a single guard.

It was believed by the prisoners that this guard could be persuaded to look the other way for approximately 500 Reichsmarks. It turned out to be a miscalculation, and on the night of the escape, Reid popped his head out of the tunnel to be greeted by a large party of guards. It was one of the greatest successes of the war for the German guards and a bitter disappointment for the 12 men who had dreamed of their freedom.

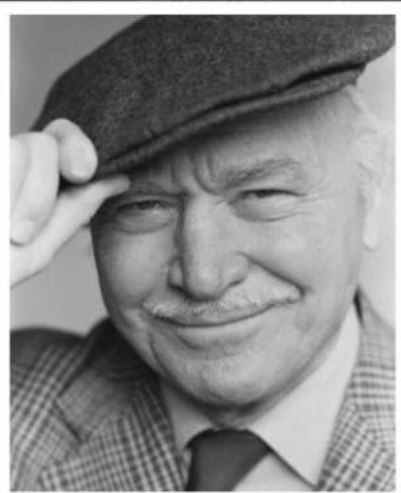
D THE TIGHT SQUEEZE SUCCESS

IMPROVISATION WAS THE KEY TO THE MOST SUCCESSFUL BRITISH ESCAPE

One of the most successful escapes in the history of Colditz unfolded like a Sunday afternoon movie classic. The now former 'escape officer' Pat Reid headed a four-man British team that started their escape, on the night of 14 October 1942, in the POW kitchens. They had to navigate their way across the outer courtyard, where the shadow of a patrolling guard was etched into the floodlights on the ground. An elaborate scheme using the prisoners' orchestra was meant to alert the escapees when the guard had his back to them (the conductor, watching through a window, would instruct the orchestra to stop at the right moment), but this part of the plan failed and the men simply had to time their runs as best they could.

Finding their way into a cellar in the German garrison building, they then squeezed through an impossibly

small vent to get out on the other side. Using ropes to descend three separate terraces, they finally split into pairs and headed for Switzerland, dressed in civilian clothes and carrying suitcases. All four men made it out, confirming the escape as the greatest single operation mounted by the British POWs at Colditz.



Left: Former British 'escape officer' Pat Reid in pictured in January 1985

B DOUBLE DUTCH SUCCESS

NOBODY EXPECTED ESCAPE FROM THE CASTLE'S MODEL PRISONERS

The Dutch prisoners at Colditz were viewed with suspicion by the others, partly because they seemed to have no interest in escaping. Even the guards seemed to view them as harmless, but Colditz was about to get a shock.

On 16 August 1941, a roll-call revealed that four Dutch officers were missing. They had escaped in pairs, on 13 and 15 August. The plan had been ingenious. A manhole cover in the middle of the exercise area had got the Dutch escape officer, Machiel van den Heuvel, thinking. Using a boisterous rugby-style game as cover, two men were smuggled under the manhole and a fake bolt made of glass was used to refasten it. Under cover of darkness, the two Dutch officers then pushed up on the manhole cover, shattering the glass bolt and making their escape. The final part of the plan was to replace the original bolt and leave the Germans befuddled. The plan was enacted twice; the first two escapees were recaptured, but the second pair made it to freedom and became the first non-Frenchmen to beat Colditz.

C THE STUFFED MATTRESS FAILURE

THE FIRST BRITISH ESCAPE ATTEMPT CAME AGONISINGLY CLOSE TO SUCCESS

In May 1941, Lieutenant Peter Allan was chosen to take advantage of an unexpected opportunity to make a snap escape. While mattresses were being ferried out of the prisoners' quarters and loaded on to trucks, the British realised that a small man could be smuggled out inside one of them.

Peter Allan was chosen, not least because he had a passing resemblance to a member of the Hitler Youth, which had probably never been an advantage before. Allan's hair-raising escapades then

included hitching a ride with a Gestapo officer, and after eight days he seemed to have scored an unlikely home run as he found his way into the American consulate in Vienna.

However, to Allan's dismay, the American consul refused to help and insisted that he left immediately, refusing even to give him money. Allan, by now exhausted, was forced to give himself up to the authorities and return to Colditz. Lack of planning (always a major problem with snap escapes) had proved his undoing.

E LEBRUN'S LEAP SUCCESS

THE MOST FAMOUS COLDITZ ESCAPE WAS ALSO THE SIMPLEST

Although several escape attempts managed to get men outside the castle confines, subsequent recaptures of the fugitives meant that only two home runs had been scored when Pierre Mairesse Lebrun hatched the most daring and death-defying attempt ever seen at Colditz.

The bare bones of the plan sounded ridiculously simple – Lebrun would vault over the wire fence of the exercise enclosure with the help of a comrade, Lieutenant Odry. This first part fraught with danger and Lebrun knew that he would be a sitting duck for the guards while he climbed the park wall that was his next obstacle.

With chilling bravery, Lebrun zigzagged away from the guards, and then ran back and forth along the wall like a target in a fairground shooting gallery, allowing the guards to fire at him until they had emptied their magazines, whereupon he could climb the wall in safety. Lebrun covered the bulk of his journey to Switzerland on a stolen bicycle. The first three successful escape attempts had all involved single French officers. All the other nations were yet to open their accounts.

“LEBRUN ZIGZAGGED AWAY FROM THE GUARDS, AND THEN RAN BACK AND FORTH ALONG THE WALL LIKE A TARGET IN A FAIRGROUND SHOOTING GALLERY, ALLOWING THE GUARDS TO FIRE AT HIM UNTIL THEY HAD EMPTIED THEIR MAGAZINES”

OFLAG IV-C



Right: Airey Neave
disguised as a
German officer

KEY

- 01 MAIN GATE
- 02 ENTRANCE GATE
- 03 GUARD HOUSE
- 04 GUARD HOUSE
- 05 RAISED CATWALK
- 06 GERMAN QUARTERS
- 07 SENIOR OFFICERS' QUARTERS
- 08 ORDERLIES' QUARTERS
- 09 SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
- 10 PROMINENTE CELLS
- 11 CHAPEL
- 12 DENTIST
- 13 CANTEEN
- 14 PRISONERS' KITCHEN
- 15 SICK WARD
- 16 PARCELS OFFICE
- 17 SHOWER BATHS
- 18 THEATRE
- 19 DELOUSING SHED
- 20 ROUND TOWER
- 21 OFFICE
- 22 CLOTHES STORE
- 23 ARCHWAY
- SENTRY

SUCCESS

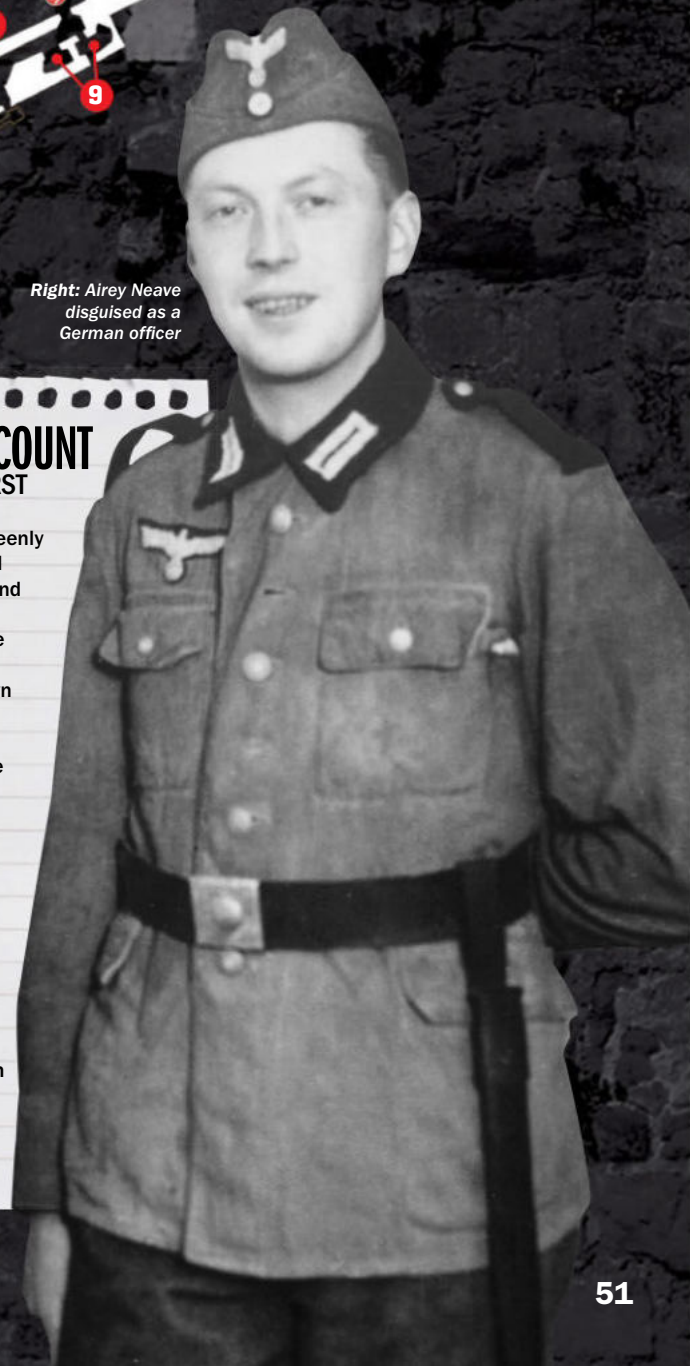
THE BRITS OPEN THEIR ACCOUNT A PLAY PROVIDED COVER FOR THE FIRST SUCCESSFUL BRITISH ESCAPE

Nobody felt the pressure to escape more keenly than the British, who had endured repeated failures while watching the French, Dutch and Poles find ways out. A successful escape was badly needed for morale, and a theatre production in January 1942 provided it.

Airey Neave and Dutch officer Tony Luteyn were the two-man team prepared for the attempt. The pair disappeared down a camouflaged trapdoor, accompanied by the British 'escape officer' Pat Reid.

As always, a healthy slice of luck was needed – at one stage the trio had to walk past an open door where a German guard sat with his back to them – but preparation was also important. Luteyn spoke German like a native, so the escapees dressed in home-made German uniforms (risking the firing squad if they were caught) and calmly walked out of Colditz as a pair of German officers, even pausing at one point to upbraid a guard for failing to salute them as they passed.

Two days later, the duo safely crossed the border into Switzerland. The Brits – with Dutch help – had chalked up their first win.



OFFIZIERSLAGER IV-C

THE LAYOUT OF COLDITZ OFFERED PERIL AND OPPORTUNITY IN EQUAL MEASURE, AS THE PRISONERS SOON FOUND OUT

'COLDITZ COCK'

The most imaginative escape plan of all sadly never reached fruition – the two-seat glider known as the 'Colditz Cock' was assembled above the Chapel with the help of a book, *Aircraft Design*, from the Colditz library. Colditz was liberated by the Americans before the glider was ready to fly.



INNER COURTYARD

Unless they were escorted to the exterior exercise areas, this was where the prisoners got the bulk of their physical activity and it could be a chaotic place with hundreds of prisoners engaged in various games. It was also the site of the regular, monotonous roll calls, or 'appells'.

THE 'PROMINENTES'

Colditz was also home to several 'VIP' prisoners (including Giles Romilly, Winston Churchill's nephew) who the Nazis believed could be valuable bargaining chips if the war went badly. They were housed in their own section of the castle.

CLOCK TOWER

The French tunnel known as 'Le Metro', which was intended to free as many as 200 men, started in the clock tower, moving down vertically through 85 feet. It then moved under the floor of the chapel. Digging noises from the tunnelling could frequently be heard, much to the chagrin of the guards.

RADIO

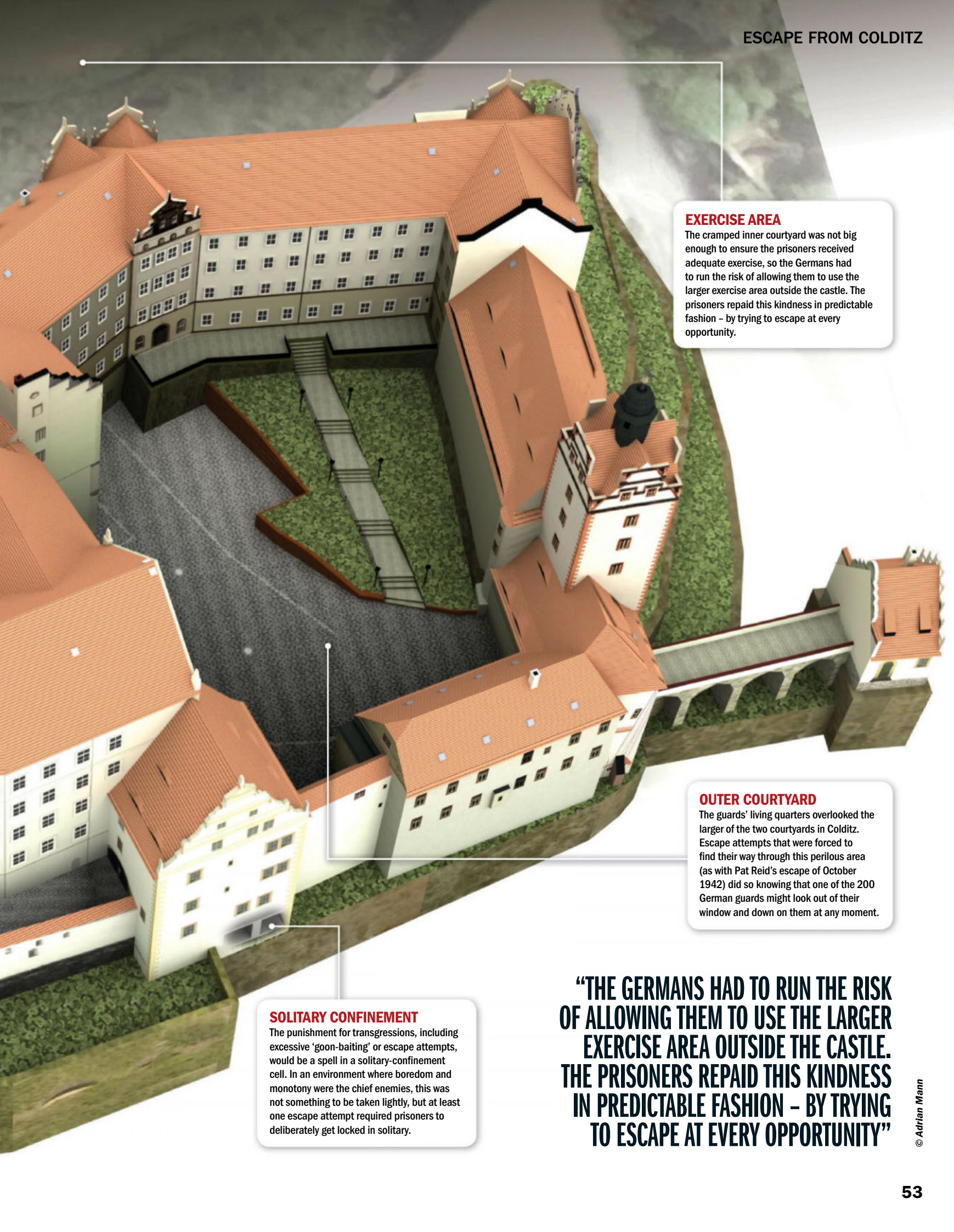
In the attic of the Kellerhaus building, the prisoners of Colditz housed one of their most closely guarded secrets – a radio that enabled them to listen to news broadcasts (and the occasional tennis match from Wimbledon) without the guards suspecting a thing. Only two men at a time were allowed to access the radio.

PARCELS OFFICE

Red Cross parcels were essential for the prisoners' physical and mental wellbeing and they were wary of taking any chances to jeopardise these precious deliveries. Parcels from home could be used to smuggle in maps, tools and information for prospective escape attempts.

THEATRE

This was valued by both the prisoners and their German guards as a source of diversion and entertainment, but the inmates were also constantly looking for possible escape routes. The theatre granted the British their first two escapes in January 1942.



EXERCISE AREA

The cramped inner courtyard was not big enough to ensure the prisoners received adequate exercise, so the Germans had to run the risk of allowing them to use the larger exercise area outside the castle. The prisoners repaid this kindness in predictable fashion – by trying to escape at every opportunity.

OUTER COURTYARD

The guards' living quarters overlooked the larger of the two courtyards in Colditz. Escape attempts that were forced to find their way through this perilous area (as with Pat Reid's escape of October 1942) did so knowing that one of the 200 German guards might look out of their window and down on them at any moment.

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

The punishment for transgressions, including excessive 'goon-baiting' or escape attempts, would be a spell in a solitary-confinement cell. In an environment where boredom and monotony were the chief enemies, this was not something to be taken lightly, but at least one escape attempt required prisoners to deliberately get locked in solitary.

“THE GERMANS HAD TO RUN THE RISK OF ALLOWING THEM TO USE THE LARGER EXERCISE AREA OUTSIDE THE CASTLE. THE PRISONERS REPAID THIS KINDNESS IN PREDICTABLE FASHION – BY TRYING TO ESCAPE AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY”

THE UNLOCKED DOOR **SUCCESS**

AFTER SEVERAL FAILURES, THE FIRST 'HOME RUN' WENT TO THE FRENCH

Four failed escape attempts had been made before the inmates of Colditz scored their first success. Two-man efforts had been the pattern until the French officer Alain Le Ray spotted a chance for a one-man 'snap escape'.

Le Ray had been playing a part in an elaborate tunnel escape plan, but he was eager to find a quicker way out of the castle. During regular spells of exercise outside, he spotted a building with an unlocked door. Le Ray realised that, if he timed his run perfectly on the walk back to the castle after exercise, he could bolt into the building while the nearest guard was out of view around a corner.

The simple plan worked, and on 11 April 1941, Good Friday, he found himself alone inside the building, stripping off his uniform to reveal civilian clothes underneath.

Following a number of train journeys and a hair-raising escape from a border patrol, an exhausted Le Ray made it across the Swiss border to freedom. He was the first man to escape from Colditz.

THE LOCKED CELLS **FAILURE**

GETTING OUT OF A CELL WAS NOT ENOUGH TO GUARANTEE A SUCCESSFUL ESCAPE

At the same time as Peter Allan was making his way to Vienna, Polish officers Miki Surmanowicz and Mietek Chmiel made their bid for freedom.

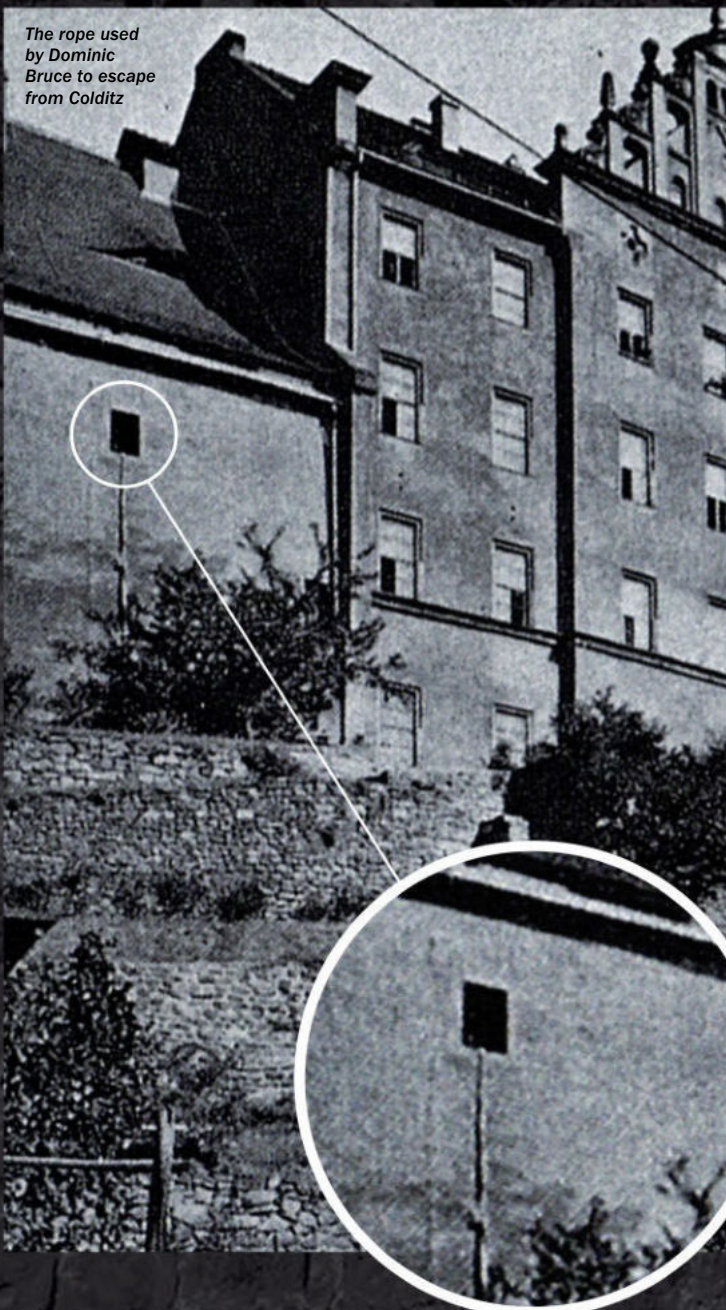
Surmanowicz and Chmiel were able to get themselves thrown into solitary confinement, where Surmanowicz used a lever (improvised from the furniture in his cell) to lift his cell door off its hinges. An expert lock-picker, he then found it easy to let his partner out of his cell and the pair locked their doors again before leaving.

The Poles then made their way along a four-inch ledge 40 feet off the ground and appeared to be on the verge of escape as they used a rope to climb 120 feet down the outside of the German guardhouse. At the last moment, however, a guard heard the sound of footfall on the wall outside and stuck his head out of a window in time to see the two would-be escapers.

The Germans were baffled as to how the Poles had escaped from their rooms without, apparently, opening the doors, but the gallant attempt was still a failure.



A prison cell in Colditz castle



The rope used by Dominic Bruce to escape from Colditz

LE METRO **FAILURE**

THE LARGEST ESCAPE EVER PLANNED CAME WITHIN TWO DAYS OF SUCCESS

If the combined British-Polish tunnel escape seemed ambitious, the French effort that started the same year was off the charts. The escape route started in the clock tower, 85 feet off the ground, and progressed through a wine cellar. Digging out of the cellar, which was accessed regularly by the guards, required a painstaking covering of tracks every evening, but the real work had only just begun. Originally hoping to be out by September 1941, the French ran into one problem after another, including oak beams, huge boulders and finally the seven foot-thick castle walls. The tunnel steadily grew and the French even rigged up lighting and an alarm system. The Germans were well aware that a tunnel was being built due to the almost ceaseless scraping noises, but they were unable to find where it was.

All of the incredible effort would have been worth it if the plan had worked: 200 French officers could have been sprung in one mad dash, but just two days before the new escape date of 17 January 1942, a surprise German inspection found the tunnel entrance and the plan was foiled.

“200 FRENCH OFFICERS COULD HAVE BEEN SPRUNG IN ONE MAD DASH”

THE MEDIUM-SIZED MAN **FAILURE**

PINT-SIZED DOMINIC BRUCE CAME WITHIN TOUCHING DISTANCE OF FREEDOM

With typical British humour, the diminutive Dominic Bruce was known as 'the medium-sized man', which made him the ideal candidate for a snap escape attempt in September 1942. A change of camp commandant brought a change of rules. The more severe newcomer insisted that the men give up much of their personal belongings, which were then gathered in boxes, including large Red Cross tea chests.

Seeing an opportunity to turn this petty gesture by the new commandant to their own advantage, the British managed to get Bruce into one of the chests. As the boxes were stored overnight within the German quarters, Bruce still had a lot of work to do, but his confidence was apparent in the jaunty message he scrawled on the chest before he left: "The air in Colditz no longer agrees with me. Farewell!"

Sadly, Bruce's confidence was misplaced. Despite making it as far as Danzig (covering part of the journey, in time-honoured fashion, on a stolen bicycle), his attempt to sneak onto a Swedish ship was detected and he was returned to Colditz.

THE COLDITZ VIPS

ALL INMATES AT COLDITZ WERE REMARKABLE IN THEIR OWN RIGHT, BUT SOME STOOD OUT EVEN AMONG THEIR ILLUSTRIOUS COMPANY



PIERRE MAIRESSE LEBRUN

THE GALLANT
CAVALRYMAN

Lebrun had wasted no time on the outbreak of war, volunteering for dangerous missions and earning medals, including the Croix de Guerre, before his capture. As well as these noteworthy credentials, he also had an aristocratic air and was recognised as the smartest man in Colditz.

Lebrun made a big impression during his limited time at the castle – his elegance and cavalry-officer bearing made him an obvious leader among the French contingent. He had made a personal pledge that he would not remain captive for more than a year and he had already made one escape attempt (getting as far as the train station at Grossbothen before his luck ran out) when he hit on the idea of simply vaulting over the fence in the prisoners' exercise area.

Lebrun's sense of style extended to his leaving a note for the Germans, asking them to forward his personal effects. Commendably, they complied.



DAMIAEN VAN DOORNINCK

THE MASTER
LOCKSMITH

Van Doorninck, with his long red beard, was something of a father figure at Colditz, not least because he was in his 40s and therefore considerably older than most of his fellow prisoners. He was also an educated man, who entertained himself (and his audiences) with lectures on subjects such as mathematics and cosmography. Not content with this, he repaired watches and was so good at it that even the guards brought their broken timepieces to him.

Van Doorninck's most telling contribution to life in Colditz, however, was his brilliance with locks. He invented a way of measuring the intricate workings of the cruciform locks used in Colditz, making it possible for him to manufacture keys to open any lock the prisoners needed to get through. Such was his importance, he refused to attempt to escape until he had trained someone else to measure the locks.



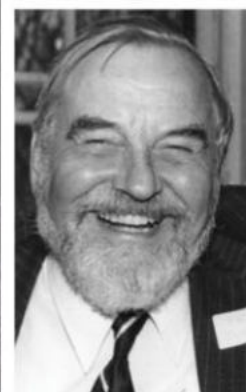
PAT REID

THE ESCAPE
OFFICER

Reid was captured just outside Dunkirk and was among the first six British officers to be transferred to Colditz. Having already escaped from Laufen, Reid wasted little time in making his first attempt at Colditz, on 29 May 1941. It was a failure, and Reid soon found himself acting as the British 'escape officer', a crucial role by which the different nationalities (each with their own 'escape officer') co-ordinated escape attempts and made sure not to get in each other's way.

While 'escape officer', Reid was not allowed to attempt to escape himself, but his experience was invaluable in the planning of many schemes and it was necessary to get his permission before embarking on any plan.

Reid also attempted to send coded messages to his girlfriend, but she never understood what he was trying to say. He finally made it to freedom, after relinquishing his position as 'escape officer', in October 1942.



PETER TUNSTALL

THE MISCHIEVOUS
PRANKSTER

Tunstall, often acting under orders from Douglas Bader, seemed to go out of his way to embody the British sense of mischief. He had been lectured by a veteran prison-breaker from World War I (Johnny Evans) and knew that if he couldn't escape, he must always be on the lookout for chances to create mayhem.

Tunstall's antics had a serious side as well, however. Creating havoc during roll-calls was the perfect way to disguise the fact that one or two officers were missing.

This tactic could not only be saved for occasions when someone had actually escaped, or the Germans would instantly realise what was going on. Tunstall was therefore trapped in the need to misbehave almost constantly.

Even the British eventually grew tired of Tunstall's steady stream of hijinks, and the Germans responded by putting him in solitary confinement for a combined total of 415 days, which was a record during the war.



DOUGLAS BADER

THE CELEBRITY

Bader was a larger-than-life character, famous before he even reached Colditz. After crashing in his Spitfire in August 1941 (the exact cause of his crash remains uncertain, and may have even been due to friendly fire), Bader wholeheartedly threw himself into his new duty – the need to escape from captivity, which inevitably saw him end up in Colditz. The Germans were in fact in awe of Bader's reputation and the guards reportedly saluted him when he arrived.

Bader never managed to escape from Colditz, but the Germans may well have wished he had. He was a perpetual nuisance and even exasperated the other British inmates.

As well as rubbing people up the wrong way, Bader also displayed a selfish streak, especially with regard to his medical orderly, Alec Ross. Selected for repatriation in 1943, Ross was due to go home until Bader intervened, wanting his personal 'lackey' to stay. Ross ended up staying imprisoned in Colditz for a further two years.

CHARGE OF THE STURMTROPPE



In 1914, the world was confronted with a new kind of warfare. The German response was to develop a new kind of soldier

New Year's Day, 1918, saw the appearance of a remarkable manual. 'The Attack in Position Warfare' was a distillation of the hard lessons learned during more than three years of intense combat on the Western Front. It detailed a new way of fighting, one that had formed as a natural response to the defensive dominance of the trenches.

It outlined a mode of warfare that stressed the co-ordination of various armaments and put an emphasis on individual initiative,

right down to the low level of the common private soldier. Gone was the old-fashioned concept of a man drawing courage from large numbers of comrades around him. The new ideal was a man who drew on his own inner resolve to get the job done, who could react to changing circumstances and who relentlessly, remorselessly, pushed forwards.

'The Attack in Position Warfare' had a simple goal, to achieve a breakthrough in enemy defensive lines. Yet that simple goal had proved fiendishly difficult to achieve and had forced

both sides of the conflict to consider and adopt new tactics. The Allies found their answer in massed tank formations. The Germans went in a different direction, developing infantry tactics that saw a new type of soldier achieve legendary status towards the end of the war. These new troops had steadily developed their tactics and now their hard-earned knowledge had been condensed into a single manual. Not for nothing has 'The Attack in Position Warfare' been described as 'the Stormtrooper Bible'.

The Kaiser's Offensive

Germany found itself in a desperate race against time as World War I moved towards its climax. The entry of the United States into the war had left the Germans with a small window of opportunity. They needed to secure

Trenches had rendered old-style frontal assaults tragically expensive, forcing both the Allies and the Germans to consider new tactics

"THE GERMANS WENT IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION, DEVELOPING INFANTRY TACTICS THAT SAW A NEW TYPE OF SOLDIER ACHIEVE LEGENDARY STATUS TOWARDS THE END OF THE WAR"



a quick victory, or at least force the Allies into a compromised peace, before the industrial might of the US was brought to bear upon them.

The Kaiserschlacht (Kaiser's Battle, also known as the Spring Offensive), was actually a series of four campaigns launched from March 1918 through to July. Heading the assaults were the soldiers of the stormtroop units, the sturmtruppen or stossgruppen, who had evolved over the preceding years.

Germany's push for victory ended in failure. The stormtroopers, though they achieved stunning local successes, suffered heavy casualties as they pushed onwards through enemy positions and the Germans found it impossible to maintain their momentum, leaving them vulnerable to the inevitable allied counter-attacks. With the welcome addition of US troops, the Allies pushed the Germans back in the Hundred Days Offensive, recovering all of the ground that had been lost.

German capitulation was now inevitable, but the stormtroopers, with some justification, refused to accept that they had been defeated.

The new battlefield

Warfare had changed dramatically over the course of the 19th century and into the 20th, and much thought had been given to adapting to the new and terrifyingly lethal landscape. Gradually, it became clear that the old densely packed formations of men simply could not survive on the modern battlefield, hammered by artillery, raked by accurate rifle fire and, more recently, dominated by the machine gun.

By the start of World War I, the standard formation for assaults had become the extended skirmish line, intended to present as small a target as possible to defending troops. The intention, however, was still to approach an enemy line and deliver a climactic bayonet charge, but the grim realities of trench warfare soon convinced most that this was far too costly a method of operation.

As early as March 1915 an experimental unit had been set up to consider new weapons and tactics. This first sturmabteilung ('assault' or 'storm detachment'), led by Pioneer officer Major Caslow, was given a new gun, a mobile field artillery piece called a Sturmkannone, which could be dragged across the battlefield to support an attack.

The detachment fared poorly in its first action. Split into small units and spread among various regiments, Sturmabteilung Caslow took heavy casualties and the Sturmkannone proved ineffective. Nevertheless, the first steps had been taken and under a new leader, Captain Willy Ernst Rohr, the stormtrooper began to emerge in a recognisable form.

"THE STORMTROOPERS, THOUGH THEY ACHIEVED STUNNING LOCAL SUCCESSSES, SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES AS THEY PUSHED ONWARDS THROUGH ENEMY POSITIONS"

ARMED TO THE TEETH

AS HIGHLY SPECIALISED TROOPS, IT IS HARDLY SURPRISING THAT THE STORMTROOPER ARSENAL WAS VERY DIFFERENT TO THAT OF THE REGULAR GERMAN INFANTRYMAN

The standard infantry weapon, the Gewehr 98, was a fine rifle, but not really suited to the sort of fighting undertaken by the stormtroopers. The shortened Karabiner 98a was not only handier for trench fighting, it also featured a different bolt design, which was less likely to catch on a uniform or other piece of equipment.

Even so, this carbine was carried into battle as a secondary weapon, slung across their back, as the stormtrooper's weapon of choice was the hand grenade. This posed a problem early in the war, when grenades were in short supply. The solution, the use of improvised explosives, was not ideal and it wasn't until 1916 that a sufficient supply of quality grenades was available to soldiers.

Several types were used, by far the most famous being the stielhandgranate, or 'stick grenade'. The hollow wooden handle allowed this grenade to be hurled long distances and it became one of the iconic weapons of the German Army, remaining in service through World War II.

The stick grenade's explosive charge was enveloped in a very thin metal casing, so fragmentation was minimal. It relied on blast to do its damage, while the smaller 'egg grenade', the second-most common design to be used, was a fragmentation type.

For especially difficult targets, a trooper might tape several stick grenades into a cluster before hurling them at an enemy position and grenade launchers offered a way of bringing their preferred weapon into action at longer ranges.

As tactics were gradually refined during the war, it was found that a balance of weaponry provided the best results. All of the men, including the commanding officer, carried grenades in a sandbag slung over the shoulder, but some would be armed with pistols (usually the P08 Luger and often fitted with a 32-round magazine), rather than a carbine. The lack of range and power of the 9mm weapon was not a factor once inside an enemy trench.

Supplementing these staple weapons were the specialist options. Flamethrowers were a part of each stormtrooper battalion, with

two-man mobile versions able to accompany the men on their raids. Heavy machine guns would lay down suppressing fire before an assault, while light machine guns could provide the same service once the stormtroopers were closer to the targeted position.

Artillery support could be called upon from divisional batteries, but the provision of modified Russian field guns allowed a stormtrooper unit to also directly engage enemy strongpoints in the duration of an attack.

Mortar companies were attached to each Stormtroop battalion, using a mix of light and heavy designs, while gas was available from 1915 onwards.

As well as the new helmet design, stormtroopers also found themselves tasked with trying out body armour, which was never likely to catch on given their need for ease and speed of movement. The steel armour (shields were also experimented with) was far too heavy to be dragged towards enemy lines, but it was sometimes used to kit out sentries.

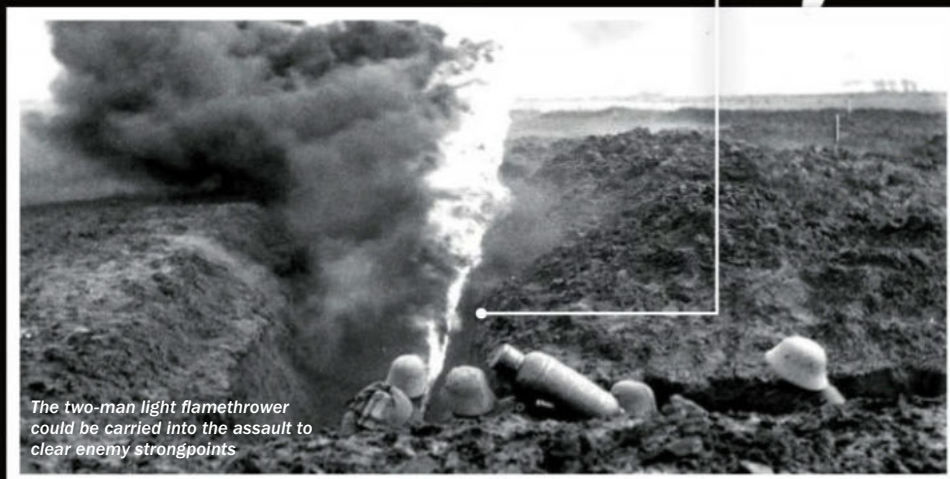
The stormtroopers also made use of a modified pack. The standard infantry pack, filled with spare uniform and rations, was far too bulky and instead an improvised 'assault pack' was used. This involved simply wrapping the trooper's greatcoat inside the M1892 tent and wrapping it around a canteen. Spare sandbags might also be wrapped inside the bundle, ready to be filled with earth to fortify captured positions.

Entrenching tools and sharpened spades could double up as hand-to-hand weapons as well, while the gas mask was an essential piece of equipment, not only to guard against enemy attacks, but as protection when moving through gas laid down in preparation for an assault.

FLAMETHROWER

A TERRIFYING WEAPON THAT SHOT LIQUID FIRE INTO AN ENEMY POSITION

The psychological impact of the flammenwerfer led to the adoption of the name Stossgruppen ('shock troops') for the flamethrower units that first appeared in early 1915. In the two-man version, one soldier would carry the fuel tank (the fuel was expelled by compressed nitrogen) while another would aim the hose.



The two-man light flamethrower could be carried into the assault to clear enemy strongpoints

GAS MASK

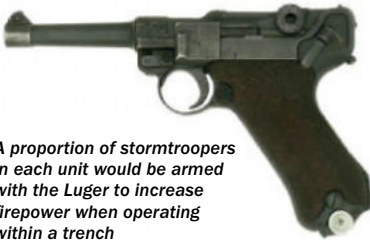
Germany's adoption of the 'higher form of killing' was inevitably mimicked by the allied powers and no soldier would countenance going into action without his gas mask. As well as its practical purpose, the gas mask also served as a psychological weapon, dehumanising the appearance of the stormtrooper.

MP18

Though it was introduced far too late in the war to have a major impact, this light machine gun was the embodiment of shock troop tactics.

P08 LUGER**WHEN RAPIDITY OF FIRE WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN POWER**

The carbine carried by stormtroopers was better suited to trench fighting than the full-sized infantry rifle, but the semi-automatic Luger pistol was even better. The eight rounds held in a Luger could be discharged in five seconds, making it a highly effective close-quarters weapon, improved even further if a high-capacity drum magazine was added.

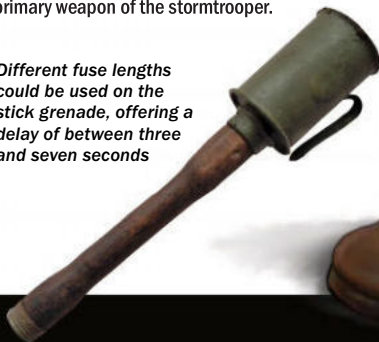


A proportion of stormtroopers in each unit would be armed with the Luger to increase firepower when operating within a trench

**STICK GRENADE
ICONIC WEAPON OF THE FIRST AND SECOND WORLD WARS**

Although other designs were tried (and the small 'egg grenade' was used extensively), it is the stick grenade that is indelibly linked with the German Army. Fitted with a standard five and a half-second fuse, it was a supplementary weapon for the regular infantryman, but the primary weapon of the stormtrooper.

Different fuse lengths could be used on the stick grenade, offering a delay of between three and seven seconds

**STAHLHELM**

The distinctive German helmet shape (nicknamed the 'coal scuttle' by British troops) offered superior protection compared to the old-fashioned Pickelhaube model. Lugs on each side allowed for the addition of an extra armour plate on the front of the helmet, although this does not appear to have been utilised often.

GRENADES

Stormtroopers went into battle laden with grenades, which were carried slung around the neck or back in sandbags. Some troopers would be designated throwers, while others would have the responsibility of keeping them supplied with grenades and protecting them from enemy fire. Even the commanding officer of an assault party would carry his share of grenades.

LEATHER PATCHES

Emphasising their willingness to adapt to conditions and the specific requirements of their duties, even if it meant taking on a rather homespun appearance, stormtroopers usually sewed leather patches onto the elbows and knees of their uniforms, offering protection when creeping towards an enemy position.

ANKLE BOOTS/PUTTEES

The stormtroopers' distinctive appearance included the preference for lace-up ankle boots and puttees rather than the standard jackboot. Lighter and more comfortable than the restrictive jackboot, they were also considered to be quieter and better-suited to crawling through the clinging mud of no-man's land.

CHARGE OF THE STURMTRUPPEN

The adoption of a new gun, a modified version of captured Russian guns, improved the efficiency of the unit, which performed with distinction at Verdun, although it again suffered heavy casualties.

The German top brass was impressed enough to expand the detachment to battalion strength and the new Sturmbataillon Rohr took on a role as an instructional unit. From May 1916, officers and NCOs from all the active German armies were sent to learn new tactics, before returning to their own formations to spread the word. This underlines one of the common misconceptions of the stormtroopers. They were never meant to be an elite force – the new tactics were intended to be spread throughout the entire army.

Independent development

In keeping with the German Army's tolerance for initiative and innovation, stormtrooper tactics had also begun to appear spontaneously throughout frontline units.

Various names were given to these units – including jagdkommando ('hunting commando') and patrouillentrupp ('raid troop'), but it was stossstruppen ('shock troops') that initially caught on. The various units experimented with new weapons and tactics, notably the use of grenades and flamethrowers.

Pioneer troops were originally called upon to fulfil the role of grenadiers, operating in small groups, or even as individual soldiers attached to a unit. However, as the possibilities of the weapon became more apparent, grenade training became universal. Because of the natural alarm caused by holding a small bomb in the hand, trainees initially used dummy grenades, and then grenades with a fuse but no charge.

An especially prepared training ground would include all the features a soldier would be



General Paul von Hindenburg, Kaiser Wilhelm II and General Erich Ludendorff formulated several strategies to achieve German victory

likely to see when out on a real battlefield – wire, trenches, strongpoints and even some civilian buildings. The grenade would become the primary weapon of the stormtrooper (although flamethrowers, light machine guns and mortars would also have their own part to play) and the troopers were actually referred to as grenadiere.

According to legend, it was the adoption of flamethrowers that gave rise to the

stossstruppen name. The terror inspired in enemy forces by a sudden deluge of liquid fire was immediate (and understandable) and flammenwerfer quickly found a place in stormtrooper units.

Two main types existed: larger flamethrowers that were mainly static, and smaller, more mobile units that could be operated by two-man teams; they were capable of causing a lot of damage quickly.

Battalion organisation

By the end of 1916 there were 16 stormtroop battalions, made up mostly of volunteers. Many of the small detachments that had sprung up among the German armies formed the basis for these new, official units.

"PIONEER TROOPS WERE ORIGINALLY CALLED UPON TO FULFIL THE ROLE OF GRENADIERS, OPERATING IN SMALL GROUPS, OR EVEN AS INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS ATTACHED TO A UNIT"



German trench raiders attacking an enemy position

THE FIRST BLITZKRIEG?

THE TACTICS DEVELOPED BY STORMTROOP UNITS IN WORLD WAR I CREATED A TEMPLATE THAT WAS FOLLOWED IN FUTURE WARS

Stormtrooper tactics focused on penetrating a section of the enemy's trench, before moving on to clear as much of the trench as possible to either side. There were various methods of attaining this goal. An initial artillery barrage could isolate the target area. For this, the guns of an entire division could be used to pound the areas behind and to each side of the target, before a brief bombardment of the target itself. Gas might also have been used to isolate an area, or heavy machine guns could lay down suppressing fire to cover an advance.

After this preparatory action, the stormtrooper party would advance. Flamethrowers could eliminate machine-gun nests before the enemy trench was reached. The trench would then be attacked with grenades before the troopers rushed in to tackle what remained of the defenders. Speed and aggression were the watchwords, as a 1916 German troop pamphlet on *Stosskraft* ('shock tactics') emphasised.

"If it happens in an attack that the attackers are fired upon from a hostile trench beyond grenade

range," the pamphlet instructed, "they must all close on the trench at full speed, throwing their grenades, lie down whilst the grenades burst, and then rush into the trench without hesitation."

Once an area had been overrun, the stormtroopers would advance along the trench. Two 'leaders', armed with pistols, would take the point, with the commanding officer behind. Further troops, armed with grenades, pistols or carbines, would follow. Grenades could be hurled into sections of the trench ahead to 'soften up' the position before it was cleared by the stormtroopers themselves.

If a section of the trench proved too difficult to overcome, a barricade could be swiftly assembled, using empty sandbags brought along or any other material to hand. Areas of a trench that had been cleared would be marked with white flags to prevent further stormtroop units from attacking.

Where large flamethrowers were used as opposed to the smaller, two-man versions, a deluge lasting for about a minute would prepare the position for assault. The stormtroopers would then aim to attack no more than a minute later to

capitalise on the confusion and panic caused by the initial flamethrower attack.

With the publication of 'The Attack in Position Warfare' in 1918, stormtrooper tactics were crystallised, but a modification occurred for the great German offensive of that year. Whereas they had previously been given a specific target, stormtroopers were now asked to avoid pockets of resistance and press on into the rear.

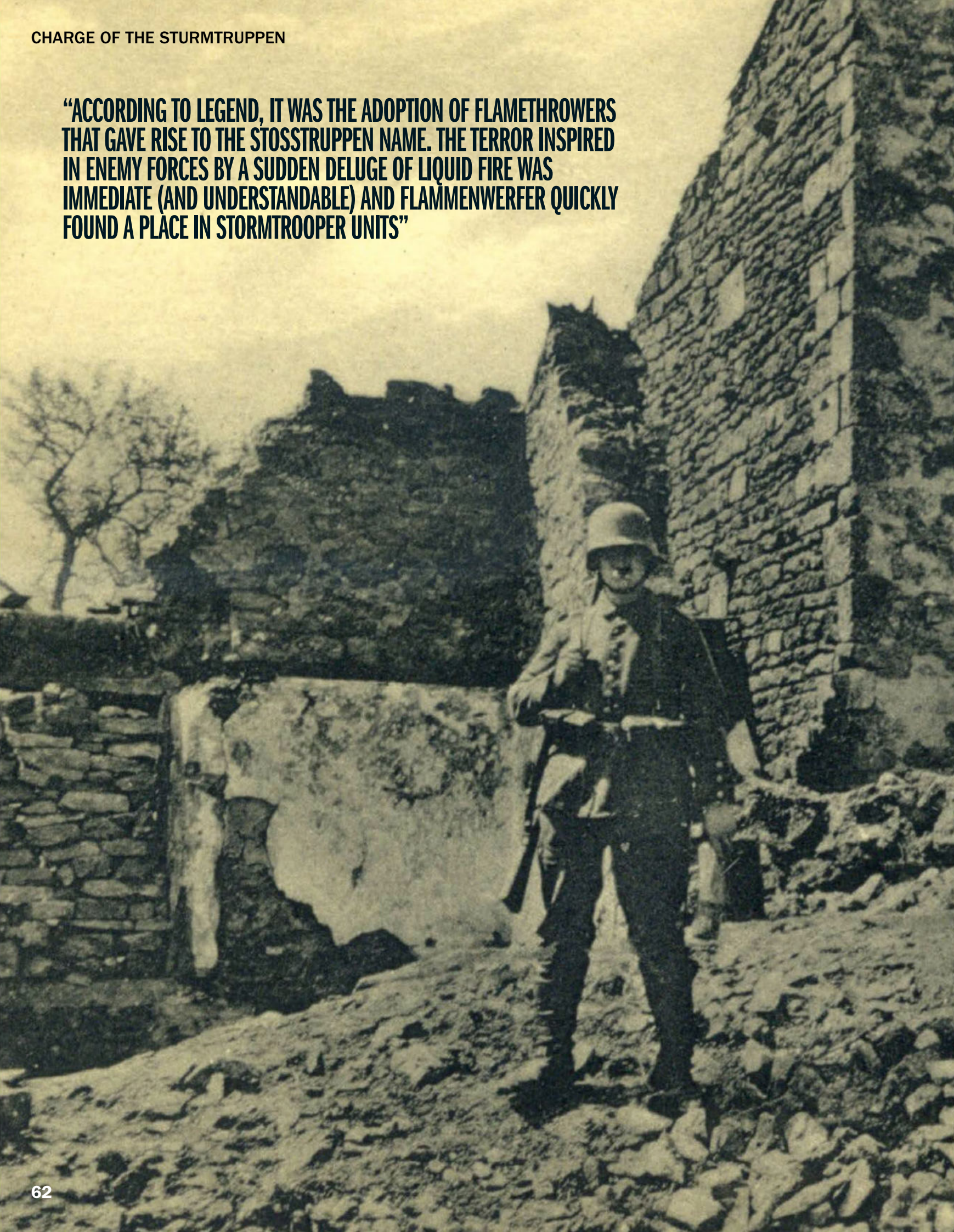
Although the term was not used at the time, this was a classic implementation of 'infiltration tactics'. It allowed the stormtroopers to keep up a rapid pace, spreading disorder and even chaos throughout an enemy position, but it also, inevitably, led to high casualties as the stormtroopers outstripped their own cover.

'Blitzkrieg', as employed by Germany in World War II, relied on the same sort of fast-moving troops to penetrate an enemy defensive line and press on into the rear. Small wonder, then, that influential World War II generals such as Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel had gained experience as stormtroop commanders.



Many of the principles employed in the 1939 invasion of Poland stemmed from World War I stormtrooper tactics

“ACCORDING TO LEGEND, IT WAS THE ADOPTION OF FLAMETHROWERS THAT GAVE RISE TO THE STOSSTRUPPEN NAME. THE TERROR INSPIRED IN ENEMY FORCES BY A SUDDEN DELUGE OF LIQUID FIRE WAS IMMEDIATE (AND UNDERSTANDABLE) AND FLAMMENWERFER QUICKLY FOUND A PLACE IN STORMTROOPER UNITS”





Though stormtrooper tactics were intended to be spread throughout the army, in reality only a minority of German soldiers made up these unique groups

CHARGE OF THE STURMTRUPPEN

A battalion would be comprised of up to 1,400 men, usually divided into five companies. One or two companies would be armed with six (and later 12) heavy machine guns. One company would operate mortars (usually eight to a company) and there would also be a troop of six two-man flamethrowers. A battery of direct support infantry artillery (armed with four of the modified Russian field guns) was also part of the battalion.

The intention was to utilise the unique merits of each type of weapon in balance with the others, resulting in a force that had the ability to take on any objective. One type of armament that was not as prevalent as it might have been, however, was the light machine gun.

The heavy machine guns employed by both sides were devastating weapons, able to lay down sheets of fire at extreme range. They were not, however, in any way mobile and the Germans lagged far behind in the development of a light machine gun to accompany assault troops across 'no man's land'.

Such guns could lay down suppressing fire to allow fellow troops to advance, and could also hold off enemy counter-attacks. Although the Germans did develop the MG 08/15, a lighter version of the full-sized MG 08, this was still a cumbersome weapon and stormtroop units made more use of Madsen guns (Danish-made and captured from the Russians) and, with more success, the Lewis gun (American-designed and captured from the British).

The stormtrooper would go into battle with a variety of equipment – spades, picks, wire-cutters, hatchets, entrenching tools and water bottles. Many of these could be used as ad hoc weapons in the vicious close-quarters combat that sometime erupted when entering an enemy trench. Stormtroopers also carried trench knives for this purpose and used a carbine, the Karabiner 98a, which was 16 centimetres shorter than the standard rifle used by the rest of the infantry and therefore easier to handle in the trenches.

One weapon that the stormtrooper did not have the luxury of using until the very end of the war, and then in only small numbers, was the sub-machine gun. Perfect for trench combat, the MP18 could fire at a rate of 400-500 rounds per minute, but it arrived too late to make much of an impact.

The 'princes of the trenches'

The new assault battalions would operate in a completely different manner to that of the standard infantry, hunkered down in its trenches. The tactics employed by stormtroop units were demanding and required fitness, intelligence, stamina and initiative. Inevitably

"PERFECT FOR TRENCH COMBAT, THE MP18 COULD FIRE AT A RATE OF 400-500 ROUNDS PER MINUTE, BUT IT ARRIVED TOO LATE TO MAKE MUCH OF AN IMPACT"

German troops make a move while carrying their Lewis guns during the Battle of the Somme



Stormtroopers lining the trenches in Belgium





*Right: A trooper carrying the
Bergmann MP18*

*Below: German stormtroopers
running across Champagne*



this meant that most of the troopers were young men, but there was a place for maturity as well. Records indicate that up to 15 per cent of a battalion would be over the age of 30. Training was demanding and occasionally deadly, as live ammunition would often be used.

Stormtroop tactics valued speed and aggression and they quickly began to not only act differently, but to take on a distinctive look as well. They quickly discarded their jackboots in favour of ankle boots and puttees, and leather patches on the elbows and knees of their uniforms offered protection when they were crawling towards an enemy.

Most importantly, however, they were among the first troops to receive a new style of helmet, the Stahlhelm, which became the standard design for the German army in later years but was highly distinctive when first introduced.

The result was that stormtroopers were inevitably viewed as a breed apart and this impression was emphasised by their preferential treatment. Not only were they given extra rations (a simple necessity given the arduous nature of their work) but they were also driven to the front lines for their sorties and then returned to bases in the rear afterwards. Their work was undoubtedly demanding and usually brutal, but they endured it in short bursts, whereas their trench-bound comrades had to suffer for much longer periods.

The stormtrooper therefore generated mixed emotions in his fellow soldiers. There was an undeniable element of hero-worship. The confidence, swagger and 'otherness' of the

"STORMTROOPERS WERE INEVITABLY VIEWED AS A BREED APART AND THIS IMPRESSION WAS EMPHASISED BY THEIR PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT"

troopers inevitably inspired awe among the other soldiers, but their operations often upset the delicate balance of trench life. A stormtrooper raid might capture prisoners or inflict casualties, but by the time the inevitable response came from the enemy, the stormtroopers themselves were well out of harm's way, leaving the regular infantry to suffer.

"The men of the storm battalions," wrote German Medical Officer Stefan Westmann, "were treated like football stars. They lived in comfortable quarters, they travelled to the 'playing ground' in buses, they did their jobs and disappeared again, and left the poor foot-sloggers to dig in, to deal with the counter-attacks and endure the avenging artillery fire of the enemy."

Yet there was also admiration for the professionalism displayed by the stormtroopers, who, again in Westmann's words, "moved like snakes over the ground, camouflaged and making use of every bit of cover, so that they did not offer any targets for artillery fire."

The birth of 'blitzkrieg'

Plans to train the entire army in the new storm tactics proved impossible to implement and in preparation for the major offensive in the spring of 1918, General Erich Ludendorff was forced to divide the German Army. The fittest troops were designated 'attack divisions', while the older and less able (as well as the newest recruits, who had not had time to be properly trained) were allocated trench-garrison duties.

Most men in the attack divisions would have received at least some training in the new tactics, but it was the stormtrooper battalions that would be the cutting edge of the offensive. Ordered to ignore strongpoints that could not be quickly overwhelmed and continue pushing into the enemy's rear, the stormtroopers inevitably outran their support and suffered from their isolation when the Allies mounted counter-attacks.

The stormtroopers had proved to be too few in number to decisively tilt the course of the war. Although they had proved highly effective tactically, they were unable to offer a strategic solution. That was to come later, as the lessons of the war were digested and plans made for the next one. The squad-based tactics of the stormtrooper would become the standard for armies across the world and were central to the infantry's role in the blitzkrieg unleashed by Germany in World War II.

By then, the stormtrooper had become a legendary figure whose very name inspired awe and even fear in the ranks of his enemies.

BETRAYAL ON THE HOME FRONT

MANY GERMAN SOLDIERS WERE UNWILLING TO ACCEPT THAT THEIR WAR HAD ENDED AND QUICKLY FOUND AN OUTLET FOR THEIR ANGER

Significant numbers of German soldiers came to believe that the capitulation of Germany was nothing less than a betrayal by civilian bodies back home. Experiencing the alienation and isolation common to fighting men through the ages, many felt that they no longer had a place in civilian society and welcomed the opportunity to enlist in independent paramilitary units. The Freikorps had a long and colourful history dating back to the 18th century, but, in post-World War I Germany, they were characterised by extreme nationalistic views and antipathy towards both socialist and communist organisations.

Some units were consciously modelled on stormtroop battalions, such as that led by General Georg von Maercker, formed in December 1918. His Freikorps included machine gun squads, flamethrowers, mortars, light artillery and armoured cars. Motives for joining such units included a lack of viable options, a desire for stability in the chaos of post-war Germany and, often, a thirst for further combat. Some Freikorps units were essentially the remnants of entire battalions, reformed under a new name. Less than a year after the end of the war, an estimated 200-400,000 men were enlisted in Freikorps units of varying size, and their attitudes were captured in the chilling words of Freikorps soldier FW Heinz: "People told us that the War was over. That made us laugh. We ourselves are the War."



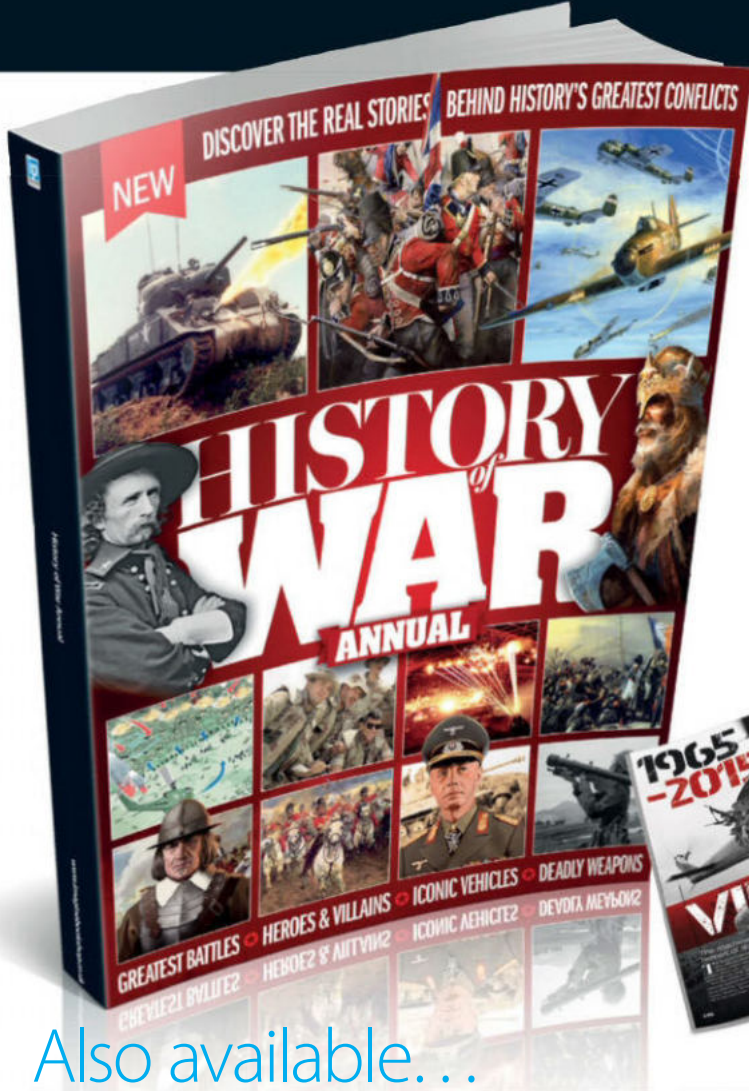
A Freikorps unit, bearing more than a passing resemblance to World War I stormtroopers, photographed in Berlin

Images: Getty

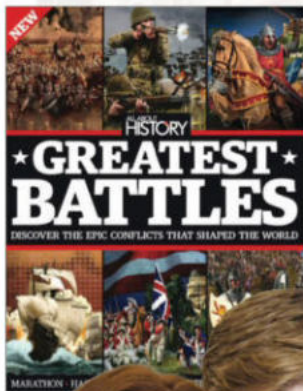
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BRIEFING

Bloodbath in Yemen

How the Arab Spring, a strongman, tribal warriors and Saudi Arabia conspired to turn the Middle East's poorest country into a regional quagmire

WORDS MIGUEL MIRANDA

It was a land of many names where frankincense and myrrh flowed to the greater world. Eight centuries after the death of Christ and hardly 200 years since the Prophet Muhammad and his followers embarked on the hegira, a learned man travelled to the southern part of Arabia where no empire held sway.

Since time immemorial, this vast domain of breathtaking mountain valleys and perilous heights ruled by petty sheikhs was a lure for caravans, traders, pilgrims, slaves... and conquering armies. Egyptian, Persian, Hellenic, Roman, Abyssinian, Islamic, Mamluk, Ottoman, British – these agglomerated nations all realised their economies were dependent on trade from the Indian Ocean.

But the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula were unforgiving climes. Where pirates didn't maraud on the ships plying goods from Bengal, Sumatra, Tonkin, the Spice Islands and Guangdong, perilous cliffs denied berth to the endless train of mariners.

This meant the southern tip of Arabia became the only viable refuge for commercial traffic, from the Old Testament until today when Britain, Saudi Arabia, the Russians, the United States, NATO, India, and even China still consider Yemen vital to their strategic interests. It's as if the country, plagued by hardship and terrorism, is the axis upon which modern civilisation revolves.

To be a Yemeni is to be an Arab from the southern coasts. It also means being a citizen of a fractious society; one so underdeveloped that it suffers from a man-made water shortage and is perpetually at war with itself. But while Yemen's troubles without are a result of its location, its problems within were brought about by its adherence to creeds that always

deviated from the powerful tides that shaped its surroundings, both before and after the emergence of Islam.

This is why 1,100 years ago, on the cusp of the 10th century, a scholar, writer and jurist from Medina named Al-Hadi Ila'l-Haqq Yahya travelled to Yemen, where tribes needed his help settling disputes among themselves. The Imam Yahya's assistance impressed his hosts a great deal, and in circumstances that historical accounts haven't clarified, he became the founder of a dynasty that took its name from Zayd ibn Ali, a militant theologian who rose up against the Umayyad Caliphate during the previous century.

Skip forward to the last century and the Zaidi Imamate still endured, until Yemen was engulfed by a cruel civil war in 1962. This was when another Imam Yahya, the ruler of the quasi-modern state known as the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen, passed away and his heir was deposed in a coup d'état. His overthrow left the country in turmoil as foreign troops and mercenaries joined the fray. Saudi Arabia cast its lot with the old regime, fearing a united Yemen inspired by the nationalistic impulses of Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt posed a threat to its own monarchy. Support was also provided by Israel to Zaidi militias.

It was the last Imam's son, Muhammad al-Badr, who struggled to win his country from the military and their foreign backers – a combination of Egyptian manpower and Soviet material support. Mobilizing a ragtag army of fierce Zaidi tribesmen, loyal subjects who wanted to uphold the dynasty al-Badr represented, the civil war devolved into a hopeless quagmire that lasted eight years.

The reign of Imam al-Badr never came to be. Saudi Arabia's support withered by 1970

"TO BE A YEMENI IS TO BE AN ARAB FROM THE SOUTHERN COASTS. IT ALSO MEANS BEING A CITIZEN OF A FRACTIOUS SOCIETY"

A HOUSE PERPETUALLY DIVIDED

1839

Three centuries after the Dutch first explored the Gulf of Aden, the British occupy the harbour. This secured the route to India and anticipated the opening of the Suez Canal.

1849

To check British expansion across Southern Arabia, the Ottoman Empire invades the realm of the Zaidi Imamate in Northern Yemen. It's a tenuous occupation fraught with uprisings and intrigue.

1918

After years of rebellion and World War I, the Ottoman Empire withdraws its legions from Arabia. The Zaidis of Northern Yemen gain nominal independence and embark on territorial expansion.





Yemeni tribesmen protest for an end to the Civil War in December 2015 with a 7-day ceasefire

and the new republican government, which was already convulsing from its own internal power struggles, remained secure in the capital Sana'a. A king without a kingdom to fight for, al-Badr chose exile and lived the rest of his life as a Londoner until his death in 1996. However, the Yemen he abandoned remained on the cusp of oblivion.

The Unseen Hand

Three years since the Arab Spring ushered the promise of democracy and progress across the Middle East, Yemen's own dreams remained in tatters. In September 2014, Sana'a was overrun by Zaidi revolutionaries called Houthis. After a decade battling government forces in their northern bases, the Houthis stormed the capital to prevent President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi from creating a federal Yemeni state of six autonomous regions.

When the Houthis forced Hadi's resignation in January 2015, he had no other recourse but to flee southwards and seek shelter in Aden, the bustling port city and former British possession, and then continue to escape to Saudi Arabia. For Yemen's neighbours, this was an unacceptable outrage. It didn't help the situation that the Houthis were suspected of receiving arms from Iran. On 25 March 2015, Saudi Arabia came to Hadi's rescue and launched Operation Decisive Storm.

In a blitz reminiscent of US interventions – featuring explosive bombing campaigns – multi-billion-dollar Saudi combat aircraft pummelled targets across Northern Yemen. A multinational ground force involving thousands of troops and sailors from 11 countries was assembled for a possible invasion.

As the war unfolded, it became apparent that the Houthis weren't acting alone. Rumours swirling in Sana'a's diplomatic circles suggested a nefarious alliance with the Houthis' former arch-rival. When asked by foreign journalists, the 73-year-old former President Ali Abdullah Saleh insisted he spent his days reading and entertaining the constant stream of guests who visited his commodious residence in the capital he used to rule. It wasn't until his home was flattened by an air strike in May 2015 that Saleh openly expressed his support for the Houthis.

While in 2011 the fallen despots of Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt were eradicated together with their dynasties, Saleh had arranged a bargain for himself. With protests inspired by events in Cairo's Tahrir Square engulfing Yemen's capital, Saleh at first tried the Syrian approach. For months his soldiers and police brutally quashed the opposition and killed hundreds. Instead of turning Yemen into a battlefield, international pressure and Saudi Arabia's diplomatic efforts convinced Saleh that stepping down was a viable alternative to sticking it out.

"IN A BLITZ REMINISCENT OF US INTERVENTIONS – FEATURING EXPLOSIVE BOMBING CAMPAIGNS – MULTI-BILLION-DOLLAR SAUDI COMBAT AIRCRAFT PUMMELED TARGETS ACROSS NORTHERN YEMEN"

Besides, he had too many enemies. Toughened by a long military career as a Zaidi soldier from the days of the kingdom, since gaining power in 1978, Saleh had performed a delicate balancing act. As president of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR), he outmanoeuvred his rivals in the Yemen People's Democratic Republic (YPDR) until the Cold War ended.

In 1990, he was one of the architects behind Yemen's unification, but the power-sharing agreement with his former rivals in the YPDR was a fragile compromise. Saleh would remain president, while his counterpart from the south would be vice president. The legislative branch was also divided among Saleh's political party the General People's Congress, conservatives, tribal sheikhs, and lawmakers representing Southern Yemen. The two former national armies along with their intelligence services would be integrated as well. Neither of these plans proved feasible and soon minor clashes between military units exploded into another civil war.

The resurgence

This is when Saleh showed his mettle – rather than return to the previous status quo of separate Yemens, he sent his army to conquer Aden, the southern capital. When Yemen had been swept up by post-colonial nationalist fervour in the 1950s and 1960s, the Protectorate formed by Britain had to contend with a home-grown insurgency. Commonwealth forces withdrew by 1967 and Aden, the prize of Yemen, had been declared the YPDR capital. This Marxist state was far from a successful exercise in progressive ideals.

Equipped with Soviet arms and led by advisers from Cuba and East Germany, the YPDR got its first taste of war with the northern YAR in 1974 and again in 1979. This showdown was just the latest clash of a long-standing power struggle between the Zaidi monarchical enclave and the tribes in the south. The YPDR also produced its own autocrat, Ali Nasser Muhammad, whose political intrigue caused a civil war in 1986 that killed an estimated 10,000 people and led to his ousting.



Muhammad al-Badr, the leader of the monarchist regions during the North Yemen Civil War

1934

The Treaty of Taif settles the first modern Saudi-Yemen War. The Zaidis concede their frontier provinces of Jizan and Najran to Saudi Arabia. The British Foreign Office is in control of the Aden Protectorate.

1948

An aborted palace coup shakes the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Northern Yemen, foreshadowing the beginning of the civil war in the 1960s and the eventual dissolution of the thousand-year Imamate.



1962

Imam Ahmad bin Yahya is deposed in another palace coup triggering the North Yemen Civil War. Saudi Arabia backs the Royalists against the military revolutionaries supported by Nasser's Egypt.



1970

By 1967, the Egyptians had withdrawn from North Yemen, having suffered more than 20,000 casualties. The war grinds on, however, and the young Imam Muhammad al-Badr loses his kingdom when Saudi Arabia recognises the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR).



A Northern Yemeni soldier back in 1994 manning an anti-aircraft gun

By 1994, President Saleh's army along with tribal militias were able to fight their way to Aden and impose a lasting peace. The significance of this event needs to be emphasised: for the first time in centuries, the northern and southern halves of Yemen were ruled by a single leader. The Republic of Yemen, recognised by the United Nations and a key US ally against terrorism, was Saleh's creation, but within a decade his regime would be battling new enemies.

First came the Zaidi tribesmen – the same hardy stock who rallied to the Imams during the 1962 civil war – impassioned by a revolutionary fervour under the charismatic Hussein al-Houthi. These men were fed up with their wretched circumstances and resented Saleh's lip service to the US.

Second were a mysterious association of local and foreign mujahideen who had made Yemen's rugged highlands a launch pad for an apocalyptic showdown with Western civilisation. They first struck the unguarded USS Cole on 12 October 2000, and then conceived a long-term campaign to overthrow Saudi Arabia's monarchy. This was Al-Qaeda's local branch.

In his own recollection of Yemen's downward spiral, the Iraqi photojournalist Ghaith Abdul Ahad learned how an imagined slight on Saleh by the northern Zaidis launched a pointless war. The innocuous confrontation happened when the president visited a mosque in Saada – a northern province and a Zaidi stronghold – on a Friday. This was when protesting tribesmen began to chant slogans reminiscent of Revolutionary Iran. Apparently this was enough proof for Saleh to send his troops and tanks against the Zaidis and their leader Hussein al-Houthi.

Al-Houthi was killed in 2004 when he tried surrendering after a long battle with the Yemeni army. His followers decimated and beaten, the survivors had fled with their leader to a cave in a place called Marran. The besiegers had time and firepower on their side and waited until al-Houthi gave himself up.

The Saleh regime's heavy handedness backfired. Rather than humble the Zaidi protest movement, al-Houthi's death galvanised it. In Yemen, where poverty was rife but guns were plentiful, even small villages maintained substantial armouries. The Zaidi tribes, whose population exceeded 5 million in a country of 24 million people, had more than enough enraged young men who now proclaimed themselves Houthis.

Saleh and the Houthis would fight six small wars from 2004 until 2010. Each grew in size and scope yet ended in stalemate. To garner support from his main allies – Saudi Arabia and the US – Saleh insisted the Houthis were Iranian stooges on the rampage. There is little evidence the Houthis ever received



On 27 April 2011, five anti-government Yemeni protesters were killed and a dozen wounded

1972

The fledgling YAR battles the Yemen People's Democratic Republic (YPDR) in the south, which used to be controlled by the British. Soviet material and advisers pour into the YPDR, prompting the Saudis to support the YAR.

1990

The end of the Cold War leaves the YPDR economy in tatters. After protracted negotiations, the northern and southern halves of Yemen unite, with leadership shared between the presidents of the YAR and YPDR.



1994

The failure to integrate the militias of the YAR and YPDR triggers another civil war. But the fighting lasts barely a year as President Ali Abdullah Saleh's larger northern army conquers the south and captures Aden.



2000

A small boat filled with explosives cripples the docked US Navy destroyer USS Cole in Aden, leaving 17 dead. The attack reveals the presence of a shadowy terrorist group called Al-Qaeda in Yemen.

either financial or material aid from Iran and it's worth noting the Houthis are Zaidis first, being Shia Muslims whose religious practice is closer to Sunnis than other Shia sects. There is a separate population of Shia Muslims in Yemen's south and south east.

The coalition

Saleh's 33-year presidency ended with an unsuccessful assassination attempt in mid-2011. During Friday prayers at a mosque in the presidential palace, a bomb was detonated that injured Saleh and killed several other officials. Saleh was badly wounded and rushed to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment. To this day the state of his injuries requires him to undergo regular physical therapy. With the promise of immunity from prosecution, Saleh retired from public life and spent the ensuing years unmolested in his commodious residence – or so the world thought.

When he grudgingly stepped down from power, his replacement was a veteran politician and southerner, Abd Rabbu Mansur Hadi. The newly-minted President Hadi was an interim head of state whose main task was to steer the country forward. Yet three years later, Yemen once again found itself embroiled in a civil war.

The benefit of hindsight makes it apparent that Hadi was undone by an alliance between the Houthis and remnants from the Saleh-era armed forces. Proof of the Houthis' collaboration with the former Saleh military surfaced as Saudi Arabia's 11-country coalition tried to fight a war piecemeal. With air strikes slowing down but not defeating the Houthis, the fighters went on the offensive and struck south, capturing the cities of Taiz, Al Bayda, Al Hudaydah, and besieging Hadi in Aden. The Houthis' rapid advance bears some similarities to the 1994 civil war that put Southern Yemen under Saleh's heel.

Operation Decisive Storm ended on 21 April 2015, but another campaign had to be cobbled together since the Houthis' territorial gains were increasing. To make matters worse, the Houthis were attacking across the border into Saudi Arabia and successfully launching Scud missiles – leftover ordnance from the days of the YPDR. Houthi planes, tanks and artillery were deployed in all their major battles. This was the proof former soldiers were now

“THE SITUATION IN YEMEN AT PRESENT IS BEST DESCRIBED AS AN INVASION BY ARAB STATES TO RESOLVE AN ONGOING CIVIL WAR”



Soldiers attend a military parade in commemoration of the 22nd anniversary of unification



This Chinese-made W85 heavy machine gun emphasises how the country is awash in weapons from all over the world



2004

To punish the defiant Zaidis north of Sana'a, President Saleh sends his army against them. The former politician and activist Hussayn al-Houthi is killed in the valley of Marran.

2012

With his regime battered by the Houthis, Al-Qaeda and a year of Arab Spring protests, President Saleh resigns from office on the condition that he is immune from arrest and prosecution.

23 January 2015

After a long illness, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah passes away, leaving the throne vacant. The former governor of Riyadh Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud becomes king. Rumors begin circulating that King Salman himself is in poor health.

January-March 2015

With the Houthis entrenched in Sana'a since September 2014, President Hadi is forced to resign and flees to Aden, where he's pursued by his enemies. On 25 March, Saudi Arabia and its regional allies launch Operation Decisive Storm.

June 2015

After months of air strikes that killed hundreds, reports surface that Houthi forces and their allies from the Saleh-era armed forces have begun launching Scud missiles at Saudi bases.

Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh speaks to senior military officers, security forces and cadets



July 2015

Online photos and videos reveal armoured units from the UAE have been deployed to Aden. It's later confirmed that hundreds of Colombian mercenaries paid for by Abu Dhabi are in Yemen.

December 2015

After nine months of war, the coalition declares a truce ten days before Christmas. Air strikes resume on 4 January 2016. The death toll in Yemen is almost 6,000 civilians killed.

fighting alongside them, and it broadened the scope of the war, challenging the Saudi grip on two provinces – Jizan and Najran – that were surrendered to the oil-rich kingdom by a treaty in 1934.

Saudi Arabia was caught in a two-front war. To preserve the Hadi administration and its supporters in Southern Yemen, where both Al-Qaeda and secessionist groups are active, it faced a fight from Aden and onwards to defeat the Houthis in the north. It's an enormous task made almost impossible by Yemen's unforgiving terrain. No wonder it took a reinforced armoured unit from the United Arab Emirates, equipped with French-made Leclerc main battle tanks and enormous Russian-made BMP-3 APCs, along with foreign mercenaries, to secure Aden and its environs.

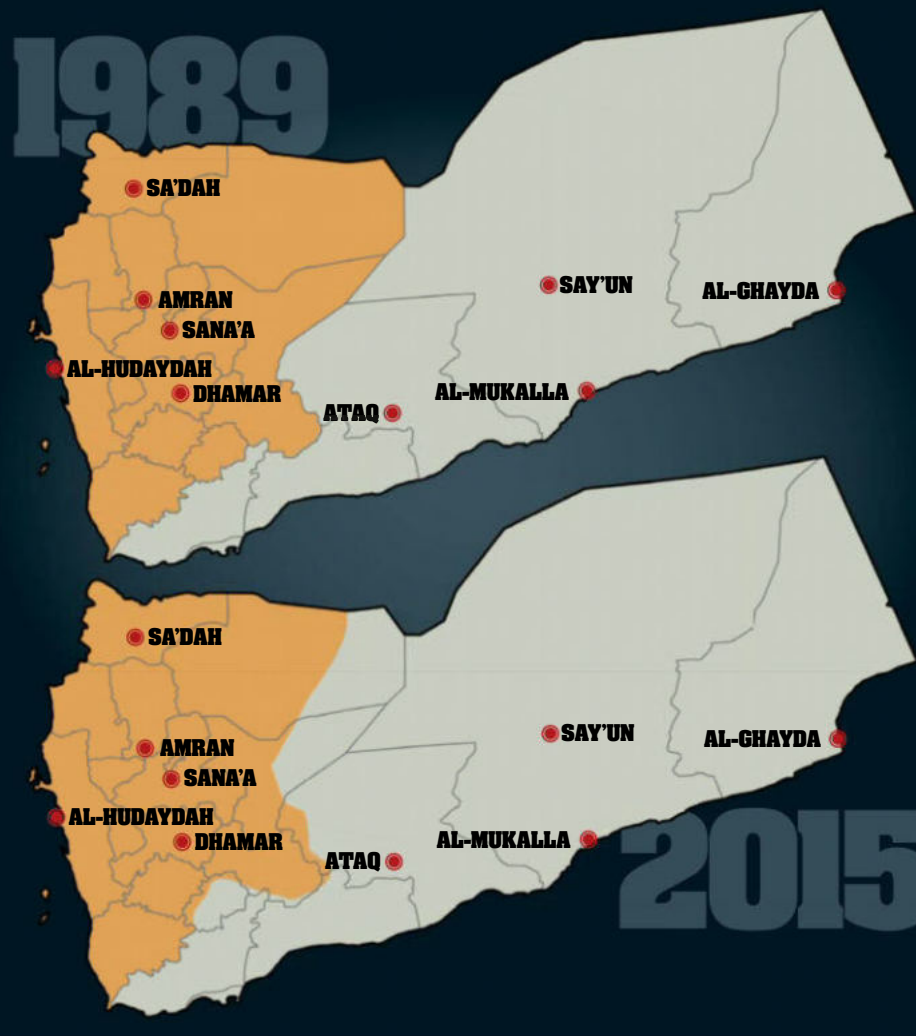
The situation in Yemen at present is best described as an invasion by Arab states to resolve an ongoing civil war. The recent histories of Lebanon, Somalia, Libya and Syria suggest this isn't the best method for establishing a genuine peace.

There's another angle from which to view the unfolding mess in Yemen. Maybe it's not the Houthis with their petty grievances, or former President Saleh with his dreams of a comeback, or Iran's disputed influence behind the scenes that's fuelling the war. When Yemen's previous government collapsed in January 2015, the ageing Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud ascended the throne as Saudi Arabia's new king. Yet it's his 30-year-old son, Mohammad bin Salman, a newly-minted defence minister who commands one of the largest military budgets in the world, who is believed to be calling the shots on foreign policy matters.

On the other hand, for the Saudis, the strategic balance is simple. Yemen reduced to a client state secures their kingdom, but a united country ruled by a hostile regime will certainly contend for control over their penetrable shared borders and threaten the monarchy. The latter is what the Houthis, Saleh, the armed forces and their southern enemies could accomplish.

NORTH VERSUS SOUTH

Geography, together with local rulers, often determines a nation's fate. The north-south divide is the recurring theme in Yemen's history, from past to present. In 2015, the Houthis in their northern enclave were battling the Saudi-led coalition invading from the south.



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HANDLEY PAGE

HALIFAX III

WORDS & IMAGES NELL WATSON



Less famous than the Lancaster, this craft nonetheless fulfilled Britain's great need for heavy bombers early on in World War II

The name Avro Lancaster is synonymous with the Royal Air Force's bomber offensive of World War II. Made legendary by the daring Dambuster raids, the aircraft springs instantly to the mind of even the most casual aviation enthusiast. But there were other heavy four-engined bombers flown by Allied air crews, very capable in their own right, that are often forgotten in modern times. One of the most significant was the Handley

Page Halifax III, flown into mainland Europe each night alongside Lancasters by aircrews from both Britain and other nations who were often fighting in exile to free their occupied countries. These heavy, four-engined Halifax bombers were developed for night operations, with defensive armament enabling the crew to fight their way to heavily defended targets deep within mainland Europe and accurately deliver a bomb load of up to 5,897 kilograms.

"IT WAS FLOWN INTO MAINLAND EUROPE EACH NIGHT ALONGSIDE LANCASTERS BY AIRCREWS FROM BOTH BRITAIN AND OTHER NATIONS"

Below: : Early Halifax models were powered by Rolls Royce V12 engines



Halifax LV907 was christened with this name as the code letter F For Freddie was considered unlucky. Despite this she became one of the luckiest Halifax bombers

Left: This restored Halifax is preserved in the colours of Friday 13th and can be seen at the Yorkshire Air Museum in the UK



While taking part in bombing raids the Halifax was also employed in anti-submarine and reconnaissance flights



HANDLEY PAGE HALIFAX III

CREW: 7 (PILOT, CO-PILOT/FLIGHT ENGINEER, NAVIGATOR, BOMB AIMER, RADIO OPERATOR/GUNNER, TWO GUNNERS)
LENGTH: 21.82M (71FT 7IN)
WINGSPAN: 31.75 M (104FT 2IN)
HEIGHT: 6.32M (20FT 9IN)
WING AREA: 110.6M² (1,190FT²)

LOADED WEIGHT: 24,675KG (54,400LB)
POWERPLANT: 4 X BRISTOL HERCULES XVI RADIAL ENGINE, 1,615HP (1,205KW) EACH
MAX SPEED: 454KM/H (282 MPH) AT 13,500FT (4,115M)
RANGE: 3,000 KM (1,860MI)

SERVICE CEILING: 7,315M (24,000FT)
DEFENCE: 8 X BROWNING MACHINE GUNS, SINGLE VICKERS MACHINE GUN IN THE NOSE
PAYLOAD: UP TO 5,897KG (13,000LB) IN BOMBS OF VARIOUS TYPES

DESIGN

As Europe became increasingly alarmed at Germany's rate of rearmament, Britain's Air Ministry issued several aircraft fighter and bomber specifications in 1936 for aircraft they anticipated might be needed in the event of war.

The initial request was for a twin-engine bomber, using several engine options currently in development but not yet in final production. An Avro design, which became known as the Manchester, was selected first, powered by the Rolls-Royce Vulture. The Halifax design was initially the backup option. The Royal Air Force convention at the time was of naming the RAF's bombers after British towns. So along with the Lancaster, Stirling, Manchester and Blenheim, the Halifax was ordered.

In late 1937, it became apparent that the Manchester, with its twin Vulture engines, was badly underpowered and incapable of the task. Handley Page was quickly requested to re-design its aircraft with a stronger wing and four engines, while Avro also re-engineered its design, which evolved into the four-engine, Merlin-powered Lancaster. This involved increasing the wing span by 3.5 metres and re-engineering the landing gear and main spar – a major task. Nevertheless, the first four-engine Halifax flew in October 1939, shortly after Britain had declared war on Germany.

Halifax Mk I and Mk II were powered by early versions of the Rolls-Royce Merlin engine developing around 1,280 horsepower. While this performance was good for powering a single-engine fighter such as a Spitfire, the combined power of four early generation Rolls-Royce Merlins still did not offer enough performance to enable the Halifax to be a capable long-range heavy bomber.

These early versions were acceptable, but performance was always marginal, with fatal losses from engine failure on takeoff, plus the lower operating altitude made the early Halifax more vulnerable to anti-aircraft fire.

In 1943, the Royal Air Force began taking delivery of what became the definitive Halifax model, the Mk III. Powered by huge Bristol Hercules supercharged radial engines developing 1,650 horsepower each, the aircraft incorporated other refinements including a redesigned rudder and still greater wing span to improve performance and make it easier to handle at low speeds. A more streamlined nose section in a single Plexiglas area also improved performance, while an additional, dorsal gun turret offered more protection from German night fighters.



Above and above right: The Halifax was quickly redesigned with four engines as it was realised that twin-engine aircraft lacked performance

"THE FIRST FOUR-ENGINE HALIFAX FLEW IN OCTOBER 1939, SHORTLY AFTER BRITAIN HAD DECLARED WAR ON GERMANY"

Redesigned twin rudders improved the Halifax's safety

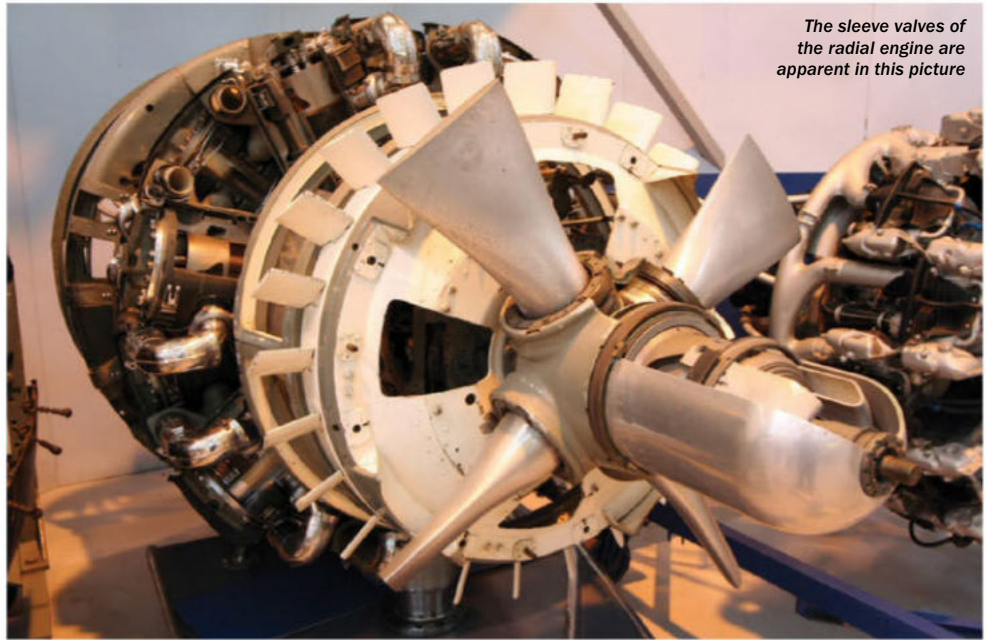


The additional engines also required a significant increase in wingspan

POWERPLANT

The Halifax III flew with four Bristol Hercules XVI supercharged radial engines. These had 14 cylinders, arranged in two rows, radially around a central crankshaft. Supercharging allowed the engines to continue developing full power at higher altitudes as the air became thinner. The engines were considered to be very robust and capable of taking battle damage and abuse by crews in the heat of combat. They were controlled either by the pilot, or the flight engineer seated immediately behind him.

“THE ENGINES WERE CONSIDERED TO BE VERY ROBUST AND CAPABLE OF TAKING BATTLE DAMAGE AND ABUSE BY CREWS IN THE HEAT OF COMBAT”



The sleeve valves of the radial engine are apparent in this picture



Four 1,600bhp engines powered the Halifax III



Engine manufacturing in progress at Bristol



Bristol Hercules engines proved very reliable



The propellers improved performance at altitude

WHY IS THE HALIFAX LESS WELL KNOWN THAN THE LANCASTER?

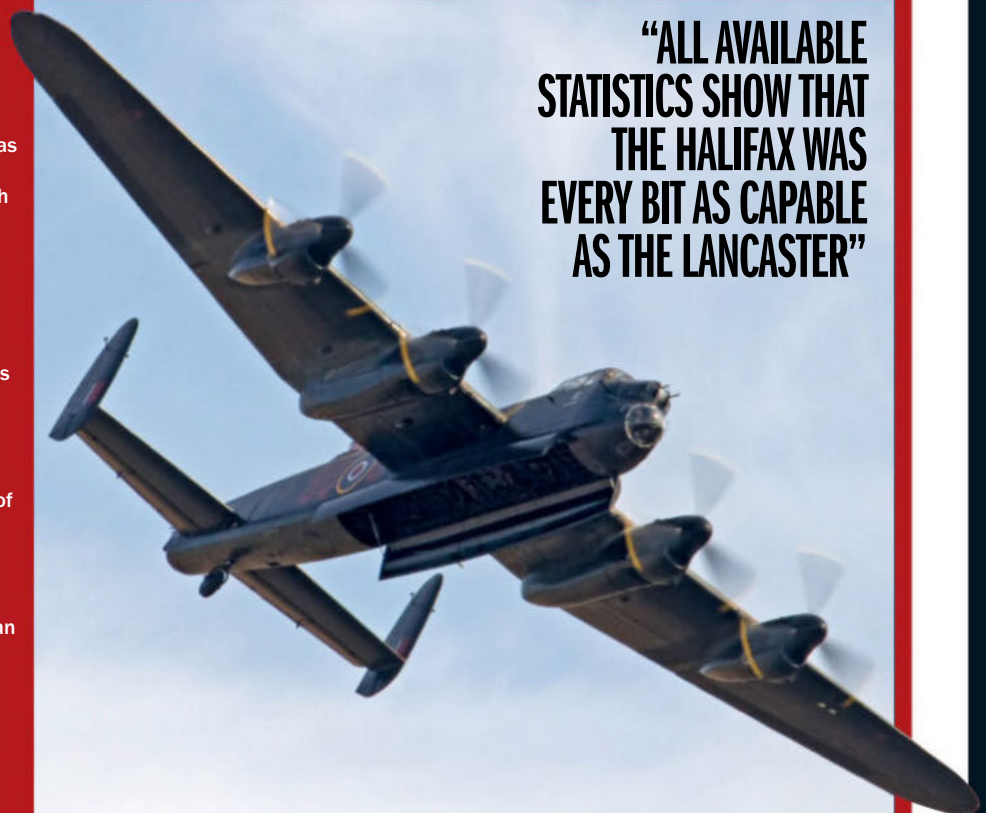
There are various theories out there, none of which can be proven by hard facts. The performance of the two aircraft was almost identical, with the Lancaster having a slightly higher service ceiling and ultimately a higher bomb payload, though evidence suggests that apart from certain high-profile raids, this was rarely used.

Early Halifax III crews had a relatively high mortality rate, almost certainly due to inadequate training and the use of the early poor-performing Halifax models as training aircraft. Once operational, Halifax loss rates were actually very similar to Lancaster figures. These early Halifax versions are considered by some to be the reason why Air Marshal 'Bomber' Harris is said to have had a poor opinion of the craft – his views perhaps clouded by memories of these early setbacks. In fact, all available statistics show that the Halifax was every bit as capable as the Lancaster, in terms of mission successes, crew survivability and the affection with which the crews held the respective aircraft.

In all probability, the Lancaster is generally considered a better-looking aircraft. Plus, of course, post-war airshow visitors still see a Lancaster flying in the skies. It is more than 70 years now since the end of wartime Halifax operations, with no airworthy survivors. Indeed, the only fully complete Halifax in the UK is the static aircraft now residing at the Yorkshire Air Museum, serving as a memorial to the crews that fought and sometimes gave their lives fighting in a Halifax aircraft.

While the Halifax may have faded from the attention of today's general public, for the crews that lived, fought and often died when flying them, the aircraft still holds a great deal of affection.

“ALL AVAILABLE STATISTICS SHOW THAT THE HALIFAX WAS EVERY BIT AS CAPABLE AS THE LANCASTER”



Every bit as capable as the Lancaster shown here, there are sadly no Halifax models left flying



“HE SPENT THE ENTIRE FLIGHT IN THIS EXPOSED POST, OPERATING A BOLTON PAUL HYDRAULIC GUN TURRET, WITH FOUR BROWNING MACHINE GUNS”

COCKPIT, CREW AND ACCOMMODATION

The Halifax carried a crew of about seven. In the nose, the navigator shared space with the bomb aimer who was also the nose gunner, operating a single machine gun. To their rear, the pilot/captain sat to the left, with the flight engineer immediately behind him. During takeoff and other critical moments, the flight engineer also sat on a fold-down seat alongside the pilot to operate the throttles if required. He did not have a set of dual controls, and should the pilot be hit and injured, he had to manhandle him from behind the controls and take over as best he could.

Below the pilot and flight engineer, the radio operator was positioned in a small space. He operated both the radios and early generation radar systems, together with friend or foe

identification equipment for crossing the English coast when returning home.

In the centre of the aircraft were two bunks. Originally anticipated as a rest area, more often they were used for treating any injured crew caught by anti-aircraft fire or attacked by German night fighters.

Behind this, a mid-upper, dorsal gun turret was hydraulically operated by a gunner, then at the far rear was the most vulnerable and lonely position, the tail gunner. He spent the entire flight in this exposed post, operating a Bolton Paul hydraulic gun turret, with four Browning machine guns. Always the preferred location for German night fighters to aim their attacks, the life expectancy of a rear gunner was considered to be just two weeks.



Nose gunner and bomb aimer position

Halifax bombers had no co-pilots. The flight engineer assisted with the throttles on takeoff and landing

"MORE THAN 55,000 AIRCREW DIED IN HEAVY BOMBERS LIKE THE HALIFAX IN WWII, YET NO MEMORIAL WAS ERECTED IN THEIR MEMORY UNTIL 2012"

Halifax IIIs were the mainstay of the Allied night bombing campaign alongside the Lancaster

IN SERVICE

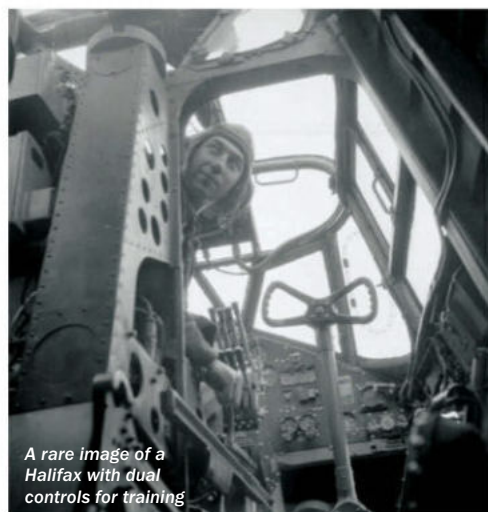
More than 6,000 Halifax bombers of various versions were built, and the aircraft served until the end of WWII. It proved to be one of the main instruments of the Royal Air Force's Area Bombing tactic over Germany. Today, this tactic is considered very controversial. The policy employed by Air Chief Marshal Arthur 'Bomber' Harris was to terrorise the German population by systematic heavy bombing of rural and industrial areas to knock out the heavy weapon producing areas of Germany that supplied the logistics to the Axis war effort. The theory was that by attacking the industrial workforce, Germany could no longer produce weapons, plus the population would become demoralised and lose the will to fight.

At the outset of WWII, Allied bombers deliberately avoided civilian and built-up areas. However, after Dunkirk, bombing was the only way to strike back. The London blitz of 1940 triggered Britain to employ the Area Bombing tactics, with Harris famously saying Germany had "sowed the wind and now they are going to reap the whirlwind." This strategy was employed from 1942 onwards, on occasion "1,000 bomber raids" were devised by Harris, which employed a 'stream' of Lancaster and

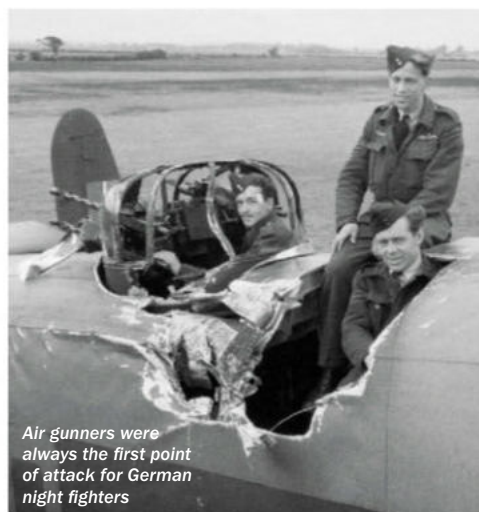
Halifax aircraft, all flying a common route and speed to a target. The advent of airborne radar enabled crews to fly accurately enough for this to take place. The theory was that German night fighter controllers could only direct their fighters at so many targets. They would become overwhelmed and enough bombers would break through to the target. Halifax III crews were often tasked with long distance nighttime raids, right until the very end of the war.

Additionally, long-distance raids to the German capital of Berlin were mounted. The Halifax was one of the RAF aircraft with the range and payload for this, though the missions were unpopular with aircrew due to the extended time they inevitably spent over hostile Germany. The Berlin raids were designed primarily to trigger air raid panic and add the propaganda value that nowhere in Germany was safe from Allied attack.

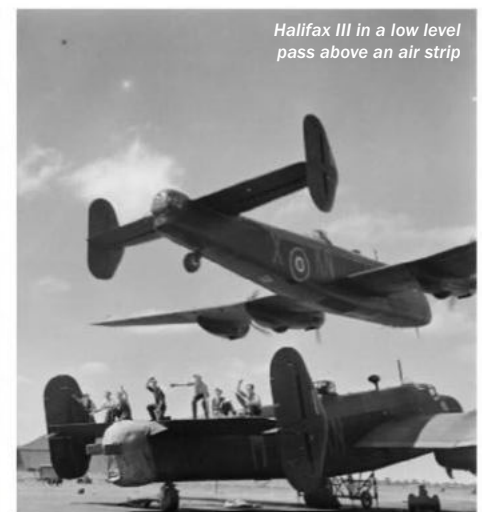
More than half a century later, the RAF bombing campaign proved to be controversial. For certain, it was an indication of how easily moral standards are progressively eroded in wartime. For many years, perhaps the saddest aspect was the lack of recognition given to the Bomber Command aircrews. More than 55,000 aircrew died in heavy bombers like the Halifax in WWII, yet no memorial was erected in their memory until 2012.



A rare image of a Halifax with dual controls for training



Air gunners were always the first point of attack for German night fighters



Halifax III in a low level pass above an air strip

PIRATE WARS

OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

During Antiquity, the Mediterranean Sea was the perfect condition for the emergence of the Sea Peoples, the Cilicians and the Vandals

The word 'piracy' has its origins in the ancient Greek word *πειράομαι*, a verb meaning to 'attempt again' and used to indicate robbery for personal gain. The Mediterranean Sea has always been a perfect environment for piratic actions due to important geographic and economic characteristics.

During the Bronze Age, there were very few European land trade routes, especially in some regions like Greece or Anatolia. Excluding some major exceptions, rivers were not used as effective ways of communication, at least in the southern part of the continent. This left the principal lines of communication and commercial exchanges to the sea. At the time, seafaring navigation was conducted along the

coasts, which squashed economic traffic into certain fixed lanes back and forth.

Having these established trade routes was important as many of the Mediterranean coastal regions were not a favourable environment for agriculture and so could not feed a large population. The only way many coastal communities had to support themselves was fishing: for this reason the



THE SEA PEOPLES

NINE TRIBES OF SEAFARING RAIDERS, EMERGING FROM WESTERN ANATOLIA AND SOUTHERN EUROPE

Recently many attempts have been made to determine the geographic origins of the Sea Peoples, but not one has been widely adopted. What we know for sure is that they were particularly active during the period 1430-1000 BCE, being involved as pirates or mercenaries in many of the major conflicts fought in the Mediterranean world.

'Sea Peoples' is a term frequently used to refer to the following groups: Denyen, Ekweh, Lukka, Peleset, Shekelesh, Sherden, Teresh, Tjeker and Weshesh. Because of their number and their violence, these tribes were referred to as 'Nine Bows' by the Egyptians. During the Late Bronze Age they invaded Syria, Canaan and Cyprus and these repeated incursions contributed to the fall of the Hittite, Mycenaean and Mitanni kingdoms.

Before being defeated in battle by the Egyptians, the Sea Peoples were frequently recruited as mercenaries: the Sherden, for example, were employed by Ramesses II as his personal guardsmen. The reliefs and inscriptions at Medinet Habu in Egypt, together with some Hittite written sources, reveal the emergence of these 'barbarian' populations as an influential power of the ancient Near East.

During their naval raids the Sea Peoples apparently seem to have avoided direct confrontations wherever possible. When forced to fight a conventional sea battle, they usually performed quite poorly, preferring hit-and-run raids with small flotillas of between 7 and 20 ships. They attacked small coastal communities to pillage and burn, but always escaped before the arrival of the local defensive forces.

As they were constantly on the move, they appeared to other contemporary cultures as populations who literally 'lived' on their ships. Some scholars, drawing attention to the many etymological connections existing between Sherden-Sardinia and Teresh-Etruscans, have suggested that some of the Sea Peoples could have settled in the western Mediterranean, creating the Nuragic and Etruscan civilizations.

Ramesses lined the Nile with ambushes which led to the demise of the Sea Peoples



PIRATE WARS OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

majority of the population had boats and developed good maritime skills. However, very frequently the efforts of these fishermen were not enough to feed their families, so many of them started to rob on the sea and launched raids against other ships.

The rocky shoreline of the Mediterranean Sea was a perfect cover for pirates. Their bases started to grow up along the eastern Mediterranean shores, which kept them hidden from view thanks to their geographical conformation. The heavy, slow merchant ships, which carried great quantities of goods, were easy targets for the first groups of pirates. As time went on, they started to attack coastal villages and to venture further inland during their raids. The escalation of pirate attacks influenced the development of the first urban civilizations of the Mediterranean and large cities, like Mycenae and Tiryns, were relocated some miles away from the shore in order to protect them from sea-borne raids. Usually, pirates tended not to go too far inland due to the threat of enemy relief forces.

The price of protection had to be paid, as some of the most important cities of the time were cut off from the benefits of commerce. This encouraged many cities that were based inland to link themselves with a port, like Athens and Piraeus or Rome and Ostia.

These early pirates were also strongly linked with slavery: every pirate port had also a slave market where those captured during raids were sold. The capture of nobility was particularly appreciated, as they could fetch a large ransom.

A Vandal warrior; after the fall of their kingdom the best of these fighters were formed into five regiments referred to as Vandali Iustiniani



ROMAN EMPIRE

MAIN TRADE ROUTE

OCEANUS ATLANTICUS

THE SERTORIAN WAR QUINTUS SERTORIUS AND THE CILICIANS

The Sertorian War, one of the many regional conflicts that occurred during the long Roman civil wars, saw an important involvement of the Cilician pirates. This was a conflict during which an alliance of Iberians and Romans fought against the dictator Sulla. The leader of this revolt was Quintus Sertorius, the main political and personal opponent of Sulla. The conflict lasted from 80 to 72 BCE and saw Sertorius' successful use of guerrilla methods against Sulla's forces in Spain. When Sertorius was obliged by his enemies to leave Spain, he fell in with the Cilician pirates (who used the Balearic Islands as a base for their actions). However, the Cilicians were driven out by a Roman fleet and Sertorius was eventually assassinated.

OCEANUS GERMANUS

'MARE NOSTRUM'

THE ROMAN NAVAL POWER SECURED PEACE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

The Cilicians were not the only group of pirates defeated by the Romans: other piratic peoples, like the Illyrians, were eliminated by the Roman navy. The Illyrians were famous sailors and pirates, who frequently raided Greek and Roman merchant vessels. The broken coast of their territory (in today's Croatia), having a screen of islands, was a perfect base from which their light and speedy vessels could attack. Thanks to the efficiency of their boarding tactics, the Illyrians became increasingly more powerful, and a real menace for the Roman traffic. After three wars that spanned from c. 229 - 168 BCE the Romans were finally able to eliminate the Balkan raiders.

LUGDUNUM

ARELATE

BARCINO

ROMA

CARTHAGO

MUSALAMI

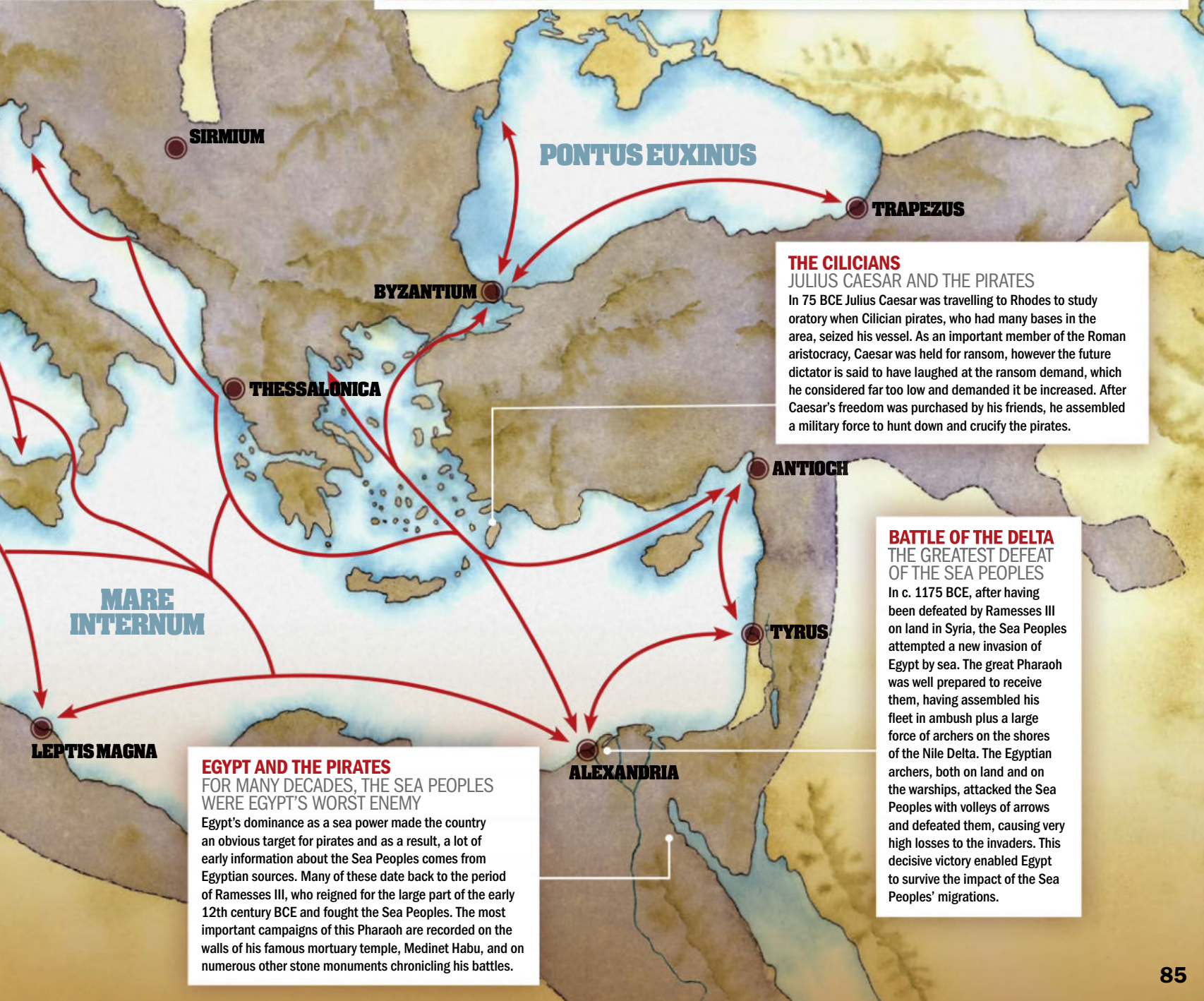
THE BATTLE OF CAP BON

THE VANDALS' GREATEST NAVAL VICTORY IN 468

The Battle of Cap Bon was a great naval clash fought during a joint military expedition of the eastern and western Roman military forces, led by Basiliscus, against the Vandal capital of Carthage. The main purpose of Basiliscus was to punish Genseric and his Vandals for their sacking of Rome in 455. During some negotiations, Genseric gathered his warships and launched a sudden attack against the Roman fleets. Many of the Vandal vessels had been filled with combustible materials and these 'fire ships' were propelled against the unprepared Romans. The result of this action was a total victory for the Vandals, who were able to defeat a very large Roman naval force with practically no losses.



The Illyrians constantly harassed Roman territory near the Balkans



THE CILICIANS

JULIUS CAESAR AND THE PIRATES

In 75 BCE Julius Caesar was travelling to Rhodes to study oratory when Cilician pirates, who had many bases in the area, seized his vessel. As an important member of the Roman aristocracy, Caesar was held for ransom, however the future dictator is said to have laughed at the ransom demand, which he considered far too low and demanded it be increased. After Caesar's freedom was purchased by his friends, he assembled a military force to hunt down and crucify the pirates.

BATTLE OF THE DELTA

THE GREATEST DEFEAT OF THE SEA PEOPLES

In c. 1175 BCE, after having been defeated by Ramesses III on land in Syria, the Sea Peoples attempted a new invasion of Egypt by sea. The great Pharaoh was well prepared to receive them, having assembled his fleet in ambush plus a large force of archers on the shores of the Nile Delta. The Egyptian archers, both on land and on the warships, attacked the Sea Peoples with volleys of arrows and defeated them, causing very high losses to the invaders. This decisive victory enabled Egypt to survive the impact of the Sea Peoples' migrations.

EGYPT AND THE PIRATES

FOR MANY DECADES, THE SEA PEOPLES WERE EGYPT'S WORST ENEMY

Egypt's dominance as a sea power made the country an obvious target for pirates and as a result, a lot of early information about the Sea Peoples comes from Egyptian sources. Many of these date back to the period of Ramesses III, who reigned for the large part of the early 12th century BCE and fought the Sea Peoples. The most important campaigns of this Pharaoh are recorded on the walls of his famous mortuary temple, Medinet Habu, and on numerous other stone monuments chronicling his battles.

THE CILICIANS

PIRATES FROM CILICIA DOMINATED THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA FOR MOST OF THE 2ND CENTURY BCE, UNTIL THEY WERE FINALLY SUPPRESSED BY POMPEY IN 67-66 BCE

The sacking of Carthage in 146 BCE saw the last strong naval power in the Mediterranean, with the exception of Rome, extinguished. However, having no significant rivals, the Romans gradually changed their naval strategy and reduced their navy.

As a result of this new 'anarchy' in the Mediterranean, the groups of eastern pirates became even more consolidated. Cilicia, together with Crete, had their most important bases; this was mainly due to its strategic position in southern Anatolia and its excellent natural harbours. The latter were small and thus easily defensible against attacks from large enemy forces.

For a long period, the Cilician pirates were the only real naval power of the east: later, they expanded their sphere of influence and organized bases all throughout the Mediterranean. By the 1st century BCE what had begun as a relatively minor problem had become a real plague for Roman commerce. The epidemic became apparent when the pirates plundered Ostia, the port of Rome. An effective military response was necessary, but the

Romans had very different opinions about the best way to defeat the Cilicians.

After a long public discussion, Pompey was given new and exceptional powers to face the pirates. In the end, his strategy was very simple but very intelligent: he decided to divide the Mediterranean Sea into a total of 13 districts, assigning to each a military fleet with an independent commander.

The largest part of the Roman fleet was assembled under the command of Pompey himself, with the unambiguous function of driving the pirates out from the western Mediterranean. Pompey's fleet attacked the

pirates or drove them into the paths of his other commanders.

Rome held power over the Mediterranean Sea, ensuring there was no place for the Cilicians to hide. Securing the Western Mediterranean in just 40 days, Pompey set his attention to the east. From some captured pirates he learned where their eastern bases were located and destroyed them one by one. After being decisively defeated at Coracesium, the Cilicians surrendered all their harbours and fortified islands to the Romans, who obtained the wealth that the pirates had collected during many decades and released many of their prisoners.

"FOR A LONG PERIOD, THE CILICIAN PIRATES WERE THE ONLY REAL NAVAL POWER OF THE EAST: LATER, THEY EXPANDED THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE AND ORGANIZED BASES ALL THROUGHOUT THE MEDITERRANEAN"

Below right: Denarii issued in the name of Sextus Pompey, son of Pompey the Great. Despite being the son of the general who had destroyed piracy in the Mediterranean, Sextus turned to piracy and fought against the Second Triumvirate. He organized a strong navy operated by Sicilian marines and extended his influence over Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. The fleet of Sextus Pompey was finally destroyed by Agrippa in 36 BCE; he died the following year



Cilician warrior, equipped as a light infantryman with javelins and small shield

THE VANDALS

THIS GROUP ESTABLISHED A POWERFUL PIRATIC KINGDOM IN NORTH AFRICA DURING THE 5TH CENTURY, BEING THE ONLY 'BARBARIAN' POPULATION WHO TURNED TO PIRACY AND LEARNED NAVAL WARFARE

The 'Pax Romana' enabled the Mediterranean world to experience some centuries of relative safety, but the decline of the Roman military power marked a renewal of piratical activities in the 'Mare Nostrum', which continued to grow during the Middle Ages.

The Vandals, under their great King Genseric, crossed from southern Spain to Africa in 429; after defeating the local Roman military forces and a bigger relief army they made peace with the Romans in 435. However, this treaty lasted only for four years: in 439 Genseric broke it and besieged Carthage. After capturing the city, the ambitious king officially created the Vandal Kingdom of North Africa. Before their conquests in Africa, during the years spent in southern Spain, the Vandals had acquired a great navigational knowledge and good seafaring skills. Thanks to these, they were able to expand their dominions in the western Mediterranean:

Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and the Balearic Islands were all conquered by them. During the following decades, at the head of a large fleet, Genseric looted the coasts of both the western and eastern Empire: Vandal activity in the Mediterranean was so significant that the same name of the sea in Old English was 'Wendeslae' ('Sea of the Vandals').

In an attempt to put a stop to the Vandal incursions, the Emperor Valentinian III offered his daughter's hand in marriage to Genseric's son. However, before the new alliance could be formed with this marriage, Valentinian III was assassinated by a usurper. As a direct result, in 455 the Vandals attacked and sacked Rome. Pope Leo the Great, the one who had already faced Attila the Hun, implored Genseric to abstain from murder and destruction of the city by fire. Apparently, the Vandals were satisfied with pillage and departed from Rome with countless valuables. In 468 an immense Roman naval expedition with

100,000 soldiers and 1,000 warships was unable to defeat the Vandals, being destroyed by them at the Battle of Cap Bon. In 534 the Vandal Kingdom finally came to an end, due to the campaign of the great Byzantine general Belisarius which caused the surrender of Gelimer, the last Vandal king.

"VANDAL ACTIVITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WAS SO SIGNIFICANT THAT THE SAME NAME OF THE SEA IN OLD ENGLISH WAS 'WENDESLAE' ('SEA OF THE VANDALS')"



Genseric sacking Rome in 455 as painted by Karl Bryullov



Heroes of the Victoria Cross

CHARLES DAVIS LUCAS

A forgotten naval engagement in the Baltic Sea saw this Irish sailor at the centre of the earliest citation for Britain's most prestigious medal

WORDS TOM GARNER

Charles Davis Lucas is a forgotten name today, but his extreme bravery in an obscure battle during the Crimean War helped to set a precedence that would culminate in the creation of Britain's highest decoration for courage: the Victoria Cross.

The Crimean War of 1853-56 is a conflict chiefly remembered for successive military blunders in what was largely seen, then and now, as an unnecessary conflict fought by vain imperial powers. The memory of the Charge of the Light Brigade and the nursing services of Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale loom large in the British national story.

However, the war was also a time of innovations that would change the way war was conducted and presented to the public. It was the first war to be widely photographed and utilise railways to supply troops. It was also the first war to use explosive naval shells and be widely reported by war correspondents. Although the latter two might be appear to be unrelated, they had a direct bearing on the story of both Charles Davis Lucas and the VC.

Lucas was born on 19 February 1834 at Scarva in County Armagh, Ireland, as the youngest son to a local land-owning family. He enlisted in the Royal Navy at the age of 13 as a cadet and began his career on HMS Vengeance. Although this seems like a very young age, it was standard practice for boys to join the service at a non-commissioned level, particularly for the younger sons of landowners.

By the age of 18, Lucas was already a veteran sailor having seen active service during the Second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852-53 where he served aboard HMS Fox. Lucas saw actions at Pegu, Promé and Donabew. His superior officers noted his bravery and

presence of mind during these actions. Consequently, he was awarded the India General Service Medal and by the age of 20 he had been promoted to the rank of mate, the 19th-century equivalent of a naval NCO. His promotion came just in time for outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853.

The war obtained its name due to the fact that most the fighting took place in the Crimean Peninsula in the Black Sea. The British and French were fighting against what was seen as aggressive imperial expansion by Russia into Ottoman possessions in southern Europe and parts of Asia. However the war was really fought as a general opposition to Russia.

The French, under Emperor Napoleon III, wanted to restore their military pride after the humiliations of the Napoleonic Wars and felt that fighting the Orthodox Russians would appeal to the Catholic majority within France.

The British, on the other hand, felt threatened by potential Russian expansion into the Eastern Mediterranean where they held the imperial monopoly. They also did not want to lose their pre-eminence in Europe, which they had held since the Congress of Vienna in

1815. Therefore military operations were not just confined to the Crimea but were also to be found in the Caucasus region, the White Sea and even the Pacific Ocean. In the case of Charles Davis Lucas, he found himself fighting in the Baltic Sea where the Russians had several important ports.

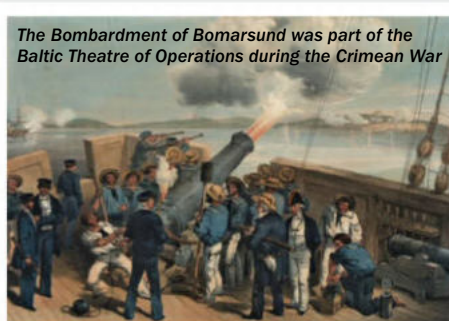
Lucas was by now serving on HMS Hecla under the command of Captain William Hall. Hecla was a second-class steam-powered paddle sloop that was launched on 14 January 1839. It had a wooden hull, was armed with six guns and had a crew of some 135 men.

Hecla was part of a fleet of Anglo-French warships under the command of Admirals Charles Napier and Alexandre Parseval-Deschênes that had been dispatched to blockade the Russian Baltic Fleet and divert their resources away from the Crimea. This powerful force ensured that no Russian battleships left their harbours while British and French warships patrolled the Baltic Sea and consequently Russian ports were blockaded.

In 1854, Hecla was approaching the fortress of Bomarsund in the Åland Islands. Though the islands were located in Finland, the entire country was then under Russian occupation and the naval fortifications in Bomarsund were the largest in the area.

This formed the centre of the occupation and firmly represented Russian military authority. However Bomarsund's defences were incomplete and its architects assumed that large ships would struggle to reach it through the narrow sea passages that guarded its entrance. Nonetheless, Royal Naval hydrographers found a passage through Ångörsund and Lumparn to Bomarsund. The now isolated and half-completed fortress became

The Bombardment of Bomarsund was part of the Baltic Theatre of Operations during the Crimean War



*Charles Davis Lucas's
actions were the
earliest to be awarded
a Victoria Cross*



03 Hall attacks the fort

Captain Hall now attacks Bomarsund without Admiral Napier's approval. The three ships carry out a sustained bombardment of the fortress. They make little headway despite the fort being incomplete.

BOMARSUND

NEW FORT

05 Lucas saves the Hecla

In the middle of the bombardment, a Russian shell lands on the deck of the Hecla but fails to explode. While the crew lie flat on the deck, Lucas picks up the shell and throws it over the side of the ship. It explodes as it hits the water. Nobody is killed and the ship is saved.

GRINKARUDDEN

04 The Russians respond

The Russian garrison, led by Jakob Bodisco, fire back at the Royal Navy ships. This includes artillery fire from a newly built battery at Grinkarudden, which is positioned southwest of the fortress. The bombardment continues into the night. Eventually the ships withdraw but both sides claim victory.

LUMPAR BAY

02 British ships pass through Ångösund

On 21 June, Captain William Hall navigates three steam-driven ships; HMS Hecla, HMS Valorous and HMS Odin through Ångösund and positions them in front of the fortress at Bomarsund. Charles Davis Lucas is on board HMS Hecla serving as a mate.

01 Naval Hydrographers survey islands

Before Bomarsund can be attacked, a passage has to be navigated through the narrow Åland Islands. The skilled fleet hydrographer Captain Bartholomew Sullivan finds a suitable channel through Ångösund and Lumparn.

a tempting target for Anglo-French politicians who wanted success in the Baltic. Both London and Paris decided that Bomarsund was to be attacked by a force of troops and ships, starting with a naval bombardment.

On 21 June three British ships, including Hecla, steamed through Ängösund to face Bomarsund, under the overall command of Captain Hall. Operating without Admiral Napier's approval, Hall planned to test Bomarsund's defences. The ships opened fire on the fortress with a bombardment that continued into the night. The Russians responded in kind and the firing only stopped when the ships ran out of ammunition. Eventually the ships left the area and both sides claimed a decisive victory despite being a stalemate in reality.

In the midst of this inconclusive bombardment were the dramatic actions of Lucas. During the middle of the firing, a Russian shell landed on the deck of Hecla and failed to explode. Exploding shells were a relatively new invention and were prone to delayed detonations. In this case, the fuse was still burning when it fell on deck and everyone was ordered to lie flat.

As Captain Hall later recalled, Lucas showed, "A remarkable instance of coolness and presence of mind in action" by picking up the live shell and throwing it overboard. The shell exploded as it hit the water, slightly damaging the ship and wounding two men. Nobody was killed in the episode and had Lucas not shown such brave quick thinking, then it is likely that the whole ship could have been destroyed, loaded as it was with ammunition.

Lucas's actions were instantly recognised and he was promoted from mate to acting lieutenant. At the time this was the only method of recognising acts of bravery for those of

"Lucas showed a remarkable instance of coolness and presence of mind in action"

Captain William Hall, commander of HMS Hecla

his rank. On the recommendation of Admiral Napier, who commended his 'great courage', Lucas was again promoted by the Admiralty to a full lieutenant with seniority. Ironically, at the same time, the Russians were also commending their own bravery during the bombardment. The fortress's commander, Jakob Bodisco, was promoted to major-general and the entire garrison received a reward of one ruble per man. Meanwhile, Captain Hall was praised for his actions by the king of Sweden and even, bizarrely, by Tsar Nicholas I. British newspapers enthusiastically reported the story of the bombardment and this media attention would have a direct impact upon the newly appointed Lieutenant Lucas.

The Crimean War witnessed the birth of the war correspondent. Journalists like William Howard Russell of *The Times* newspaper used the new telegraph lines to send news from the battlefields back home much quicker than had been previously possible. Also the journalists wrote detailed accounts not just of the bravery of the troops but also the squalid conditions they had to endure.

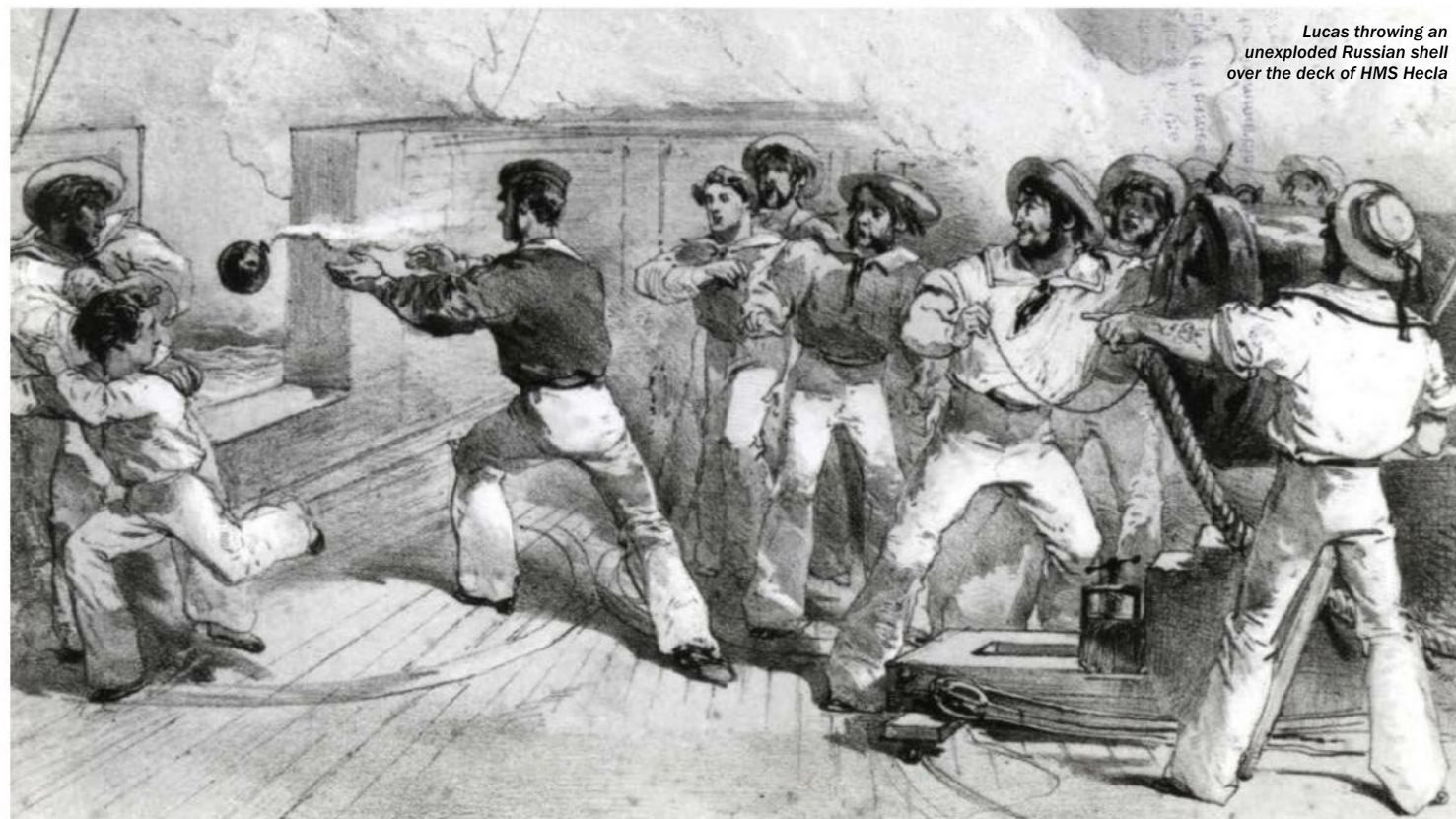
As such, the British public became aware for the first time about the realities of war and demanded for an award to be created to recognise the valorous actions of the ordinary soldier. At the time, only senior officers were awarded medals for bravery. The House of Commons took up the idea and Queen

Victoria and Prince Albert became enthusiastic advocates. Victoria chose the design and Albert suggested the name: the Victoria Cross.

The cross was subsequently founded in January 1856 with 111 medals being gazetted to veterans of the Crimean War. Admiral Napier recommended that Lucas receive the medal and he was duly presented with his Victoria Cross by the queen on 26 June 1857 along with 62 other winners. Additionally, in an unusual gesture, he was also awarded the civilian Royal Humane Society Medal for lifesaving, despite being engaged in a military activity.

Lucas went on to carve out a traditionally successful career in the navy. He rose up the officer ranks to serve on the ships HMS Liffey, HMS Edinburgh and HMS Calcutta. He retired from active service and became a retired rear admiral in 1885. In a neat personal twist he married Frances Hall in 1879, who was the daughter of his commander at Bomarsund Captain Hall. Lucas died aged 80 in Great Culverden, Kent, on 7 August 1914, three days after Britain entered World War I.

Since its creation, the Victoria Cross has been awarded 1,358 times to men of different nationalities and in many conflicts. Charles Davis Lucas's unique achievement was to be the earliest man whose bravery was deemed worthy of the award, and as such his dramatically courageous action at Bomarsund set the pattern for future heroes to aspire to.



Lucas throwing an unexploded Russian shell over the deck of HMS Hecla

Images: Alamy

BOOK REVIEWS

Our pick of the newest military history titles waiting for you on the shelves

SEEING THE WAR THE STORIES BEHIND THE FAMOUS PHOTOGRAPHS OF WORLD WAR II

Writer: David P Colley **Publisher:** ForeEdge Books **Price:** £19.99

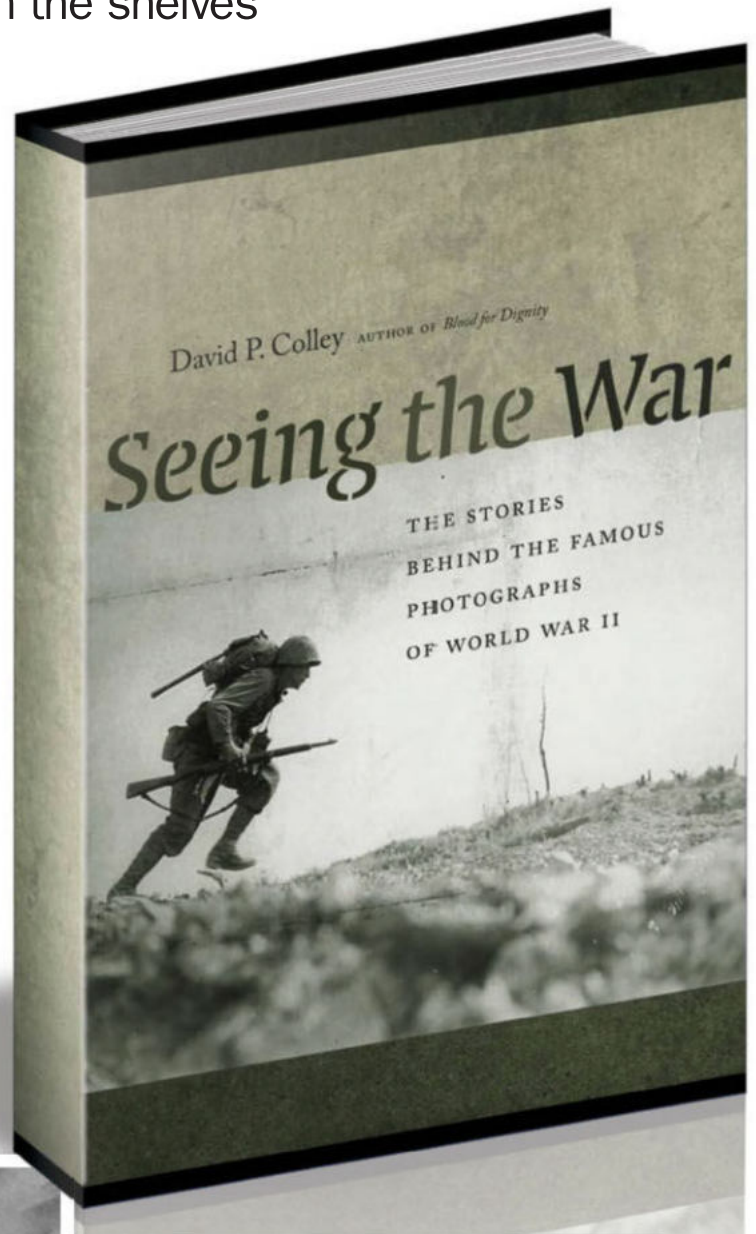
GO BEHIND THE SCENES OF SOME OF WWII'S MOST ICONIC AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY IN THIS COLLECTION OF ENLIGHTENING BIOGRAPHIES

From school-based textbooks and documentaries to exhibitions and memorial programming, World War II, like almost every war of the 20th century, has been immortalised countless times on both big and small screens alike. Images of soldiers weathering the bitter cold warfare of the Battle of the Bulge; marines rushing across the killing fields of Guam; prisoners of war starved beyond the point of recognition.

The war photography of that conflict showed the real men and women behind the battles, but not every photo came with a story. Many of them, their subjects preserved in service for all time, were lost to anonymity in the decades that followed. And it's this fascinating gap in our knowledge that has prompted military history writer David P Colley to set out in search of those answers in the form of his latest book, *Seeing The War*.

It certainly makes for fascinating reading, especially if you like your historical biographies with a splash of investigative journalism. Because that's exactly what Colley presents here, the untold stories of the subjects in these famous photos, their lives before the war, the background that led to that captured moment and the lives that unfolded thereafter.

Colley's own writing style can feel a little cold at times, but considering he's mostly juggling dates, locations and factual information it's understandable to a degree. Thankfully, where possible, these stories are exposed by the subjects themselves, or their closest family, giving the whole book a far more personable feel. Colley only focuses on those photos involving American personnel, but there's still a font of insight to be found in the accounts of these subjects.



Below from left to right: Last rites being given to an injured crewman; a destroyed B-17F falling through the air; men on the beaches during the Battle of Saipan



INFERNO IN CHECHNYA

Writer: Brian Glyn Williams **Publisher:** ForeEdge Books **Price:** £20

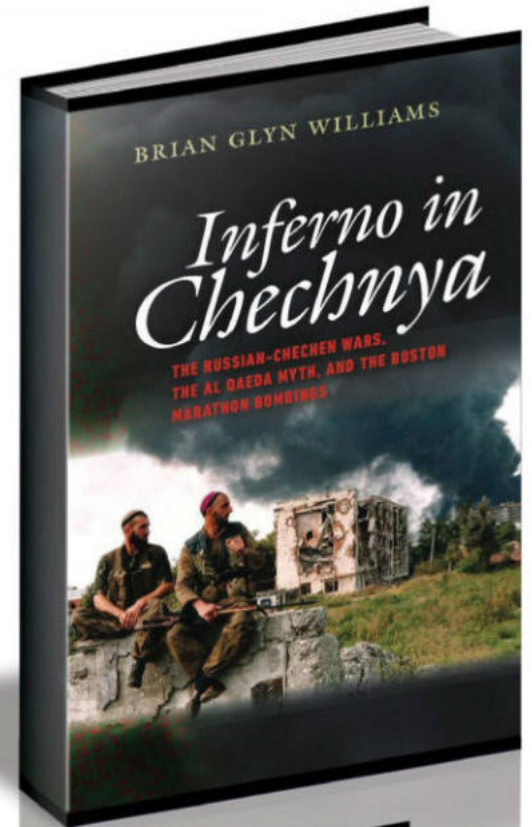
THE BOSTON MARATHON BOMBINGS SERVE AS A GATEWAY FOR THIS BIOGRAPHY OF THE CHECHEN PEOPLE AND THEIR FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

While *Inferno In Chechnya* name checks the despicable acts perpetrated by the Tepsurkaev brothers at the Boston Marathon Bombings in 2013, the acts of these two radicalised young Chechen-American men forms only a small part of this tale. Their road to terrorism forms the primer to the far darker and more palpable story of their homeland – a history of war, upheaval and genocide.

Even after the wake of the bombings, the historical context of Chechnya and its age-old war with Russia remained unclear; such was the many religious and socio-political aspects that had forced the former mountain people of the Caucasus into exile and near extinction. Williams, a professor of Islamic history at the University of Massachusetts, attempts to provide a clearer picture of this centuries long struggle, and the results are unsurprisingly grim.

With plenty of first-hand accounts and diary entries throughout, *Inferno In Chechnya* explores the earliest days of the Caucasus' and the proud yet hardy people that inhabited them. As well as the almost perpetual struggle against Russian oppression, its inclusion of religious factors (such as the myths surrounding links to Al-Qaeda and the introduction of Islam to the region) adds a fascinating new dimension to this bloody tale.

The story of Chechnya is one of almost endless bloodshed, and while it can make for squeamish reading, it proves a vital part of understanding the defiant and battle-hardened spirit of the Chechen people. The story of the Tepsurkaevs receives a noticeably briefer section by comparison, but such an approach does little to diminish what is still a heart-wrenching and engaging read.



INDIA'S WAR

THE MAKING OF MODERN SOUTH ASIA, 1939-1945

Writer: Srinath Raghavan **Publisher:** Allen Lane **Price:** £30

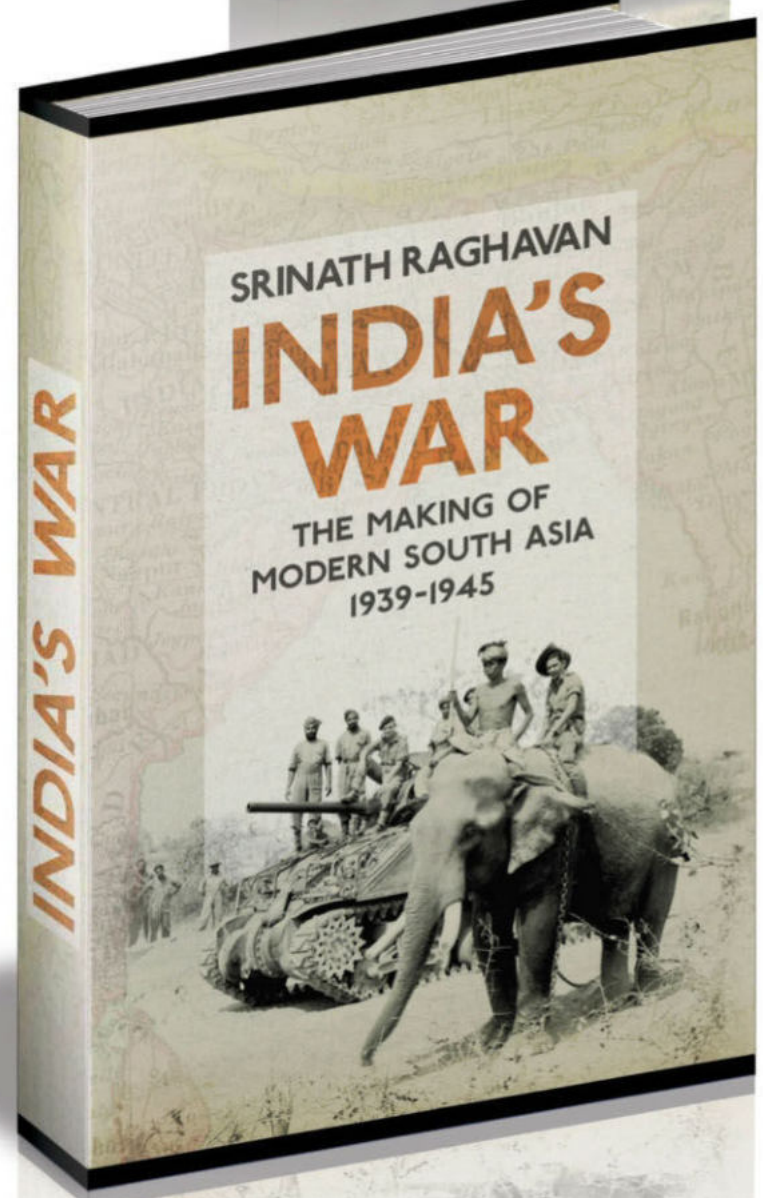
A NATION'S DUTY TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE AND ITS DESIRE FOR INDEPENDENCE INSPIRE THIS COMPREHENSIVE MILITARY CHRONICLE

For all the countless books, films and TV programs covering World War II, few have chosen to highlight the contribution the Indian and the British Raj made towards the Allied war effort. And fewer still have managed to capture the war from the eyes of the Indian soldiers themselves, recounting the political, economic and social factors of being forced to fight war for a distant master.

Srinath Raghavan, a university fellow at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi and author of *1971: A Global History Of The Creation Of Bangladesh* (published by Harvard University Press), aims to fill that gap with his detailed recounting of Indian military mobilisation and the reality of fighting a war on a global stage. We not only get to see the Indian contribution to the most significant

battles (India being one of the main dominions that made a significant impact on the British Empire's fight against the Axis), but also witness the crumbling of the Indian Raj and the rise of Indian independence.

World War II proved to be an accelerant in the decades old tensions between British colonial interests and the pro-independence nationalists, and this fresh angle gives Raghavan's historic curation a uniquely rewarding feel that continues throughout. His inclusion of events such as the fear of Japanese invasion also adds a new dimension to the period as you see Indian soldiers not just fighting out of political duty, but out of a desire to protect the sanctity of their home soil. For those looking for a different perspective on a much-documented conflict, *India's War* is an easy recommendation.



ALL ABOUT HISTORY RECOMMENDED READING



THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE IN 100 FACTS

Part of the quirky and concise 100 Facts series from Amberley comes this new addition by Caroline Rance. To summarise a long process of trial and error, including eureka moments and headache-

inducing blunders, the pocket-sized book chronicles notable events, discoveries and practices throughout time. Wit is where Caroline Rance triumphs, making it a great coffee table book with an extra dose of educational value, while at the same time providing a level of insight that exemplifies Rance's knowledge and research into historical medicine.



GUNS OF THE THIRD REICH: THE SMALL ARMS OF HITLER'S ARMED FORCES 1933-1945

Since its fall, the Third Reich has fascinated many, not least due to the innovative weaponry wielded by

the Wehrmacht. Hitler's Blitzkrieg was undertaken with some of the most modern firearms of the era and this book details them all from the Walther PPK to the MG 42. Written by firearms expert John Walter, the book focuses on the small arms that were used and covers the whole interwar period as well as World War II, so the book contains as many Maxim O8s as it does FG 42s.



10 GREATEST SHIPS OF THE ROYAL NAVY

Britain's rise to global dominance owed as much to the Royal Navy as it did the Industrial Revolution. The power of its naval fleet allowed British factories to ship their goods across the seas without

threat for more than 150 years, during which it was the world's most powerful force. From Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar, HMS Victory, to the flagship of the Falklands War, the HMS Invincible, this book delves into the stories of ten of the most famous ships ever to form part of the Royal Navy's arsenal.



THE VICTORIAN TREASURY

When Queen Victoria took to the throne it was a refreshing breath of air for the British monarchy. Victoria would move away from the debauched kings that had preceded her and usher in a new

age of change and prosperity. But can you pack all the change, invention and innovation into one pocket sized book? Lucinda Hawksley is determined to try. Anyone looking for detailed insight into the Victorian world will be left wanting more meat on the bones, but it's an accessible book that can be picked up and scanned at leisure.

PARIS '44: THE CITY OF LIGHT REDEEMED

Author: William Mortimer Moore **Publisher:** Casemate UK **Price:** £19.99

THE SPEED OF THE FRENCH CAPITULATION IN 1940 IN THE FACE OF A SEEMINGLY INVINCIBLE WEHRMACHT SET THE COUNTRY ON A PATH TOWARDS FOUR YEARS OF SUBJUGATION AS NAZI OCCUPATION RAPIDLY FOUND ACCEPTANCE AMONG A BELEAGUERED POPULATION

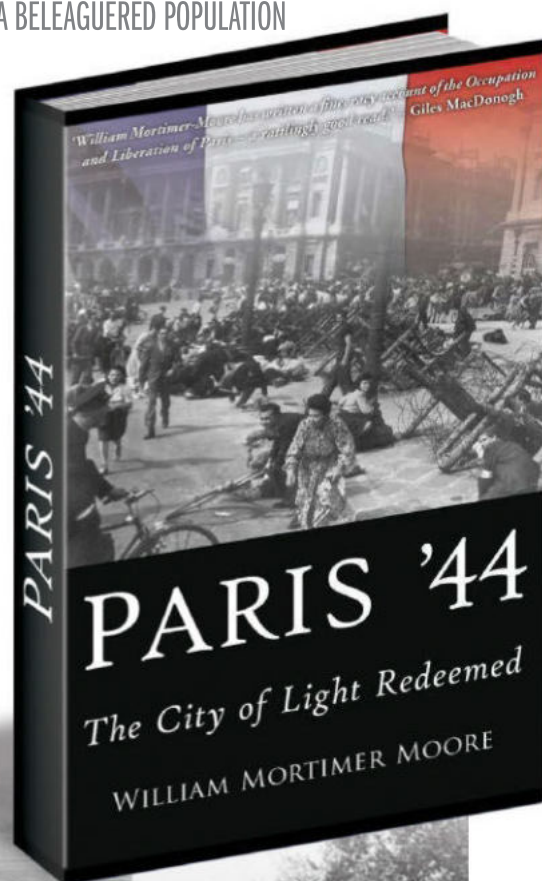
Arguably one of the most tragic effects of Hitler's march across the Meuse was the extinguishing of the city of light: Paris. In just under 500 pages Moore journeys through the darkened streets and safe houses of a fallen city, recounting the efforts of General Charles de Gaulle (exiled in London) and various resistance movements to ignite the flames of rebellion, a fire that the collaborationist Vichy government was keen to put out.

From the euphoria of the D-Day landings to the monumental decision by Eisenhower to send General Leclerc's French 2nd Armoured Division into the capital, *Paris '44* is an enthralling literary race, culminating in de Gaulle's famous victory march along the Champs Elysees on 26 August.

It is staggering to think that only three days before Tiger tanks had been making their own deathly march down the same road, such was the speed with which the Wehrmacht abandoned their prize following Choltitz's surrender.

The many street battles that forced the overall triumph are told in exciting bursts, interspersed with intriguing examinations of the various players in this enthralling drama.

A fine collection of photographs provide the reader with an intimate look at a city that rose to redeem itself and the warriors who led the way. A swashbuckling read.



Prime Minister Winston Churchill walks down Champs Elysees during French Armistice Day

ROMAN SHIELDS

Authors: Hilary and John Travis

Publisher: Amberley Books **Price:** £20.00

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE ROMAN SOLDIER'S MEANS OF PROTECTION

The fearsome legions of Rome would not have laid claim to the lands just beyond their own city, let alone the Empire they would conquer, without cutting edge military equipment. None would prove more important than the shields they carried into battle.

In what must have been a feat of endurance at times, Hilary and John Travis, keen historians of Rome, have created the ultimate book for Roman shield enthusiasts. From the elongated 'Doncaster' shields of the early Imperial period through to the beautifully woven rawhide shields used in the later years of Roman domination, the Travis's record the development of this vital armament in staggering detail.

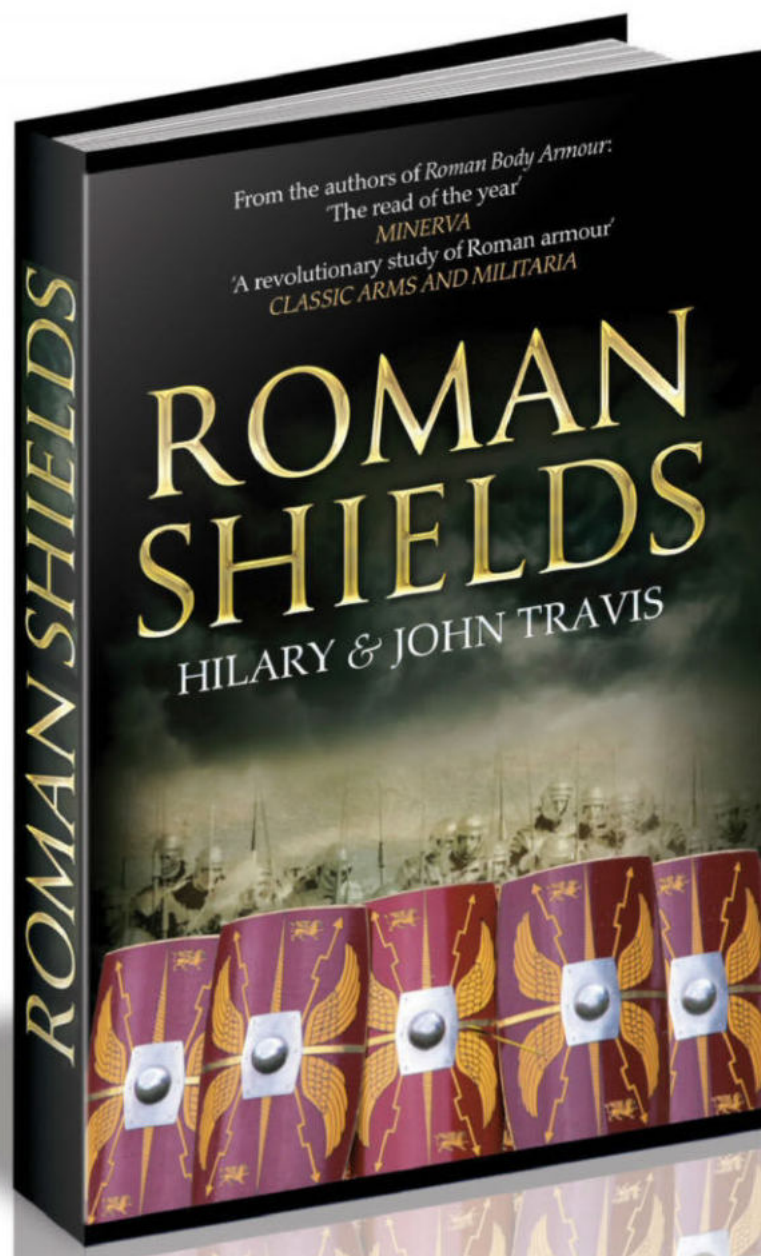
Intricate illustrations and photographs taken at re-enactments feature prominently as the varying decorations, shield

bosses and tactical manoeuvres are examined, along with the many different materials used to create the shields.

Due to the subject matter this can be a little heavy going in places. However, the history of the origins of the Roman Army are a particular highlight, as are the many ways in which the shields were field tested in order to see how they would have performed in battle. It is not often that an author will go to such lengths in order to provide their readers with such minutiae as the force required to fire an arrow through Roman armour.

Excerpts from greats such as Tacitus also make for an interesting read, as does the chapter focusing on the use of shields in battle. Overall an educational work but not one for the faint hearted.

"IN WHAT MUST HAVE BEEN A FEAT OF ENDURANCE AT TIMES, HILARY AND JOHN TRAVIS, KEEN HISTORIANS OF ROME, HAVE CREATED THE ULTIMATE BOOK FOR ROMAN SHIELD ENTHUSIASTS"



LINCOLN'S BOLD LION

Author: James T Huffstodt **Publisher:** Casemate **Price:** £19.99

FOLLOW THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BRIGADIER GENERAL MARTIN DAVIS HARDIN

Men of war are often given the moniker of a fearsome animal as a testament to their courage. Some don't always live up to them. But in General Martin Davis Hardin, Huffstodt has dedicated his work to a man who certainly did.

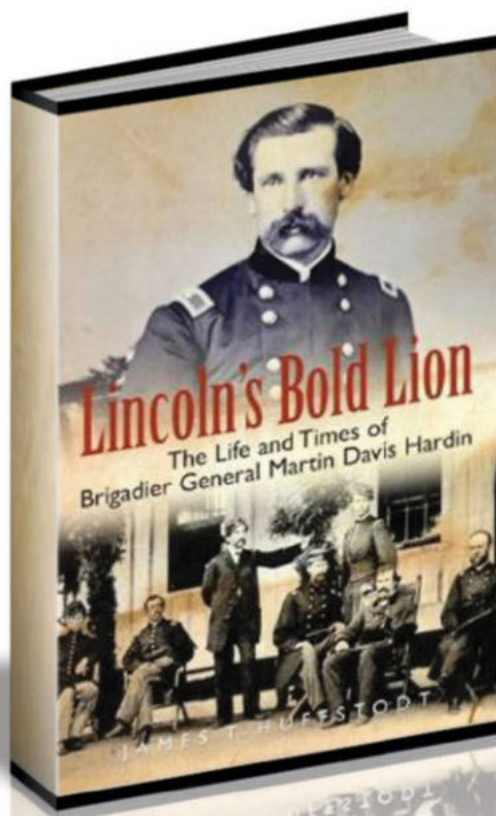
Born in 1837 to a wealthy Illinois family, Hardin ironically never wanted a military career, hoping to pursue law. However, his astute mother ensured that at the age of 17 he enrolled at West Point Military Academy. What followed were five brutal years under the guidance of future Civil War Generals, none more notorious than Robert E. Lee himself, which shaped the rest Hardin's life.

Under the watchful eye of Abraham Lincoln, a family friend, Hardin graduated and enrolled in artillery school. He did not have to wait long to test himself as Civil War erupted. Hardin

fought with distinction throughout, witnessing bloodbaths such as Second Bull Run in 1862, where he suffered a near-fatal wound.

He would lose an arm at the Battle of Mine Run in 1863 but remarkably continued to serve until 1870, retiring to become a lawyer. The fact that his death at the age of 86 mustered barely a few lines in the Florida press is nothing short of a tragedy.

Huffstodt must be applauded for restoring Hardin to his rightful place as a heroic patriot who fought tirelessly for his nation. The accounts of the battles are utterly gripping, and the very personal photographs of Hardin and his family provide a rare glimpse into the life of a man who thrived in the chaos of a war that tore the United States in two. A highly recommended read.



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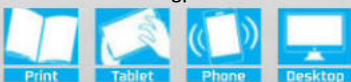


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BATTLE OF VERDUN

STEP INSIDE THE MEAT GRINDER OF THE WESTERN
FRONT AS FRANCE FIGHTS FOR ITS SURVIVAL



**“WITH YOU IT RESTS, CALLIMACHUS,
EITHER TO BRING ATHENS TO SLAVERY,
OR, BY SECURING HER FREEDOM, TO BE
REMEMBERED BY ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS”**
– GENERAL MILTIADES

HELMET OF MILTIADES

This relic from the Greco-Persian War belonged to the Athenian victor at the Battle of Marathon

Fought in 490 BCE, the Battle of Marathon was the culmination of a huge invasion by Darius I of Persia to subjugate the whole of Greece. The Persians had already conquered Macedonia, as well as many Aegean islands; the city-state of Athens, with its embryo democracy, was the next to be attacked.

On the plains of Marathon, 8-10,000 Greek soldiers faced a Persian army some 20-60,000 strong. Ten Athenian generals debated on their course of action. One of them, Miltiades, called for a bold attack, but several

generals disagreed. Miltiades then turned to Callimachus, an Athenian official who was allowed to vote with the generals, and said: “With you it rests, Callimachus, either to bring Athens to slavery, or, by securing her freedom, to be remembered by all future generations.” Callimachus voted for action, and Miltiades took command the army.

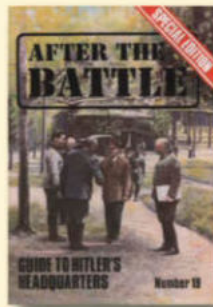
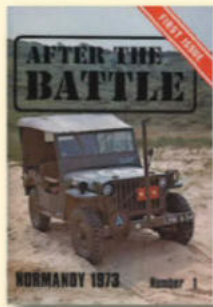
The Greeks charged towards the Persians, with Miltiades deliberately weakening his centre. When the Persians tried to counterattack, they were enveloped by the Greeks’ strengthened

flanks and began taking heavy casualties. Panic spread and the Persians fled back to their ships, reputedly losing approximately 6,400 men to only about 200 Greeks.

Athenian democracy was saved and Persian aggression momentarily checked. Miraculously, Miltiades’s bronze helmet still exists, as it was presented as an offering to Zeus, and found in the Stadium at Olympia in 1961. It is an excellent example of a helmet used by Hoplite infantry, and the name “Miltiades” can be seen on the bottom-left cheek.

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BATTLE**

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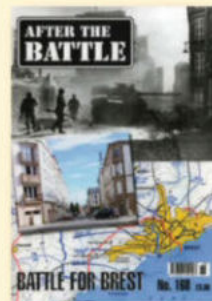


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BRINGS HISTORY TO LIFE



The Desert Rats' Cromwell

A vehicle made famous by the British 7th Armoured Division, who had been dubbed the Desert Rats for their exploits in North Africa. However, the 7th Armoured were not issued with Cromwells until 1944, when they returned to the U.K. to prepare for D-Day. They fought in their Cromwells across France and into Germany, and eventually took part in the Victory Parade on September 7, 1945, in Berlin.

Development for the Cromwell first began in 1940 when the General Staff knew the Crusader would soon become obsolete. The tank was the fastest British tank to serve in the war, with a top speed of 40 mph (64 km/h). Its dual purpose 75 mm main gun had HE and armour-piercing capabilities and its armour ranged from 8 mm up to 76 mm overall.

In World of Tanks, you can command the Cromwell from the driver's seat. World of Tanks is an online PC game dedicated to tank warfare in the mid-20th century, with over 300 of history's most iconic tanks.

A variety of tiers, upgrades, equipment, and decals allow you to make each tank, your progression and your gameplay experience unique.

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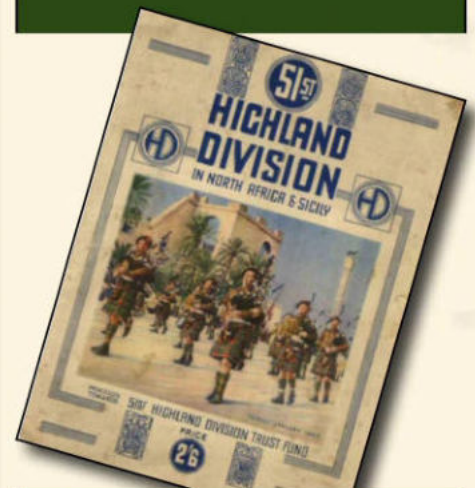
Zeppelins attack: the age of the airship



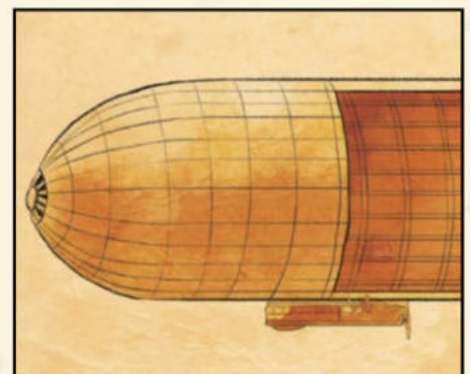
Meet the Expert
Roger Nixon talks about
military research



QUICK GUIDE TO...
Finding your Home Guard ancestor



**TREASURES FROM
OUR ARCHIVE**
The 51st Highland Division



**GUEST FEATURE FROM
HISTORY OF WAR MAGAZINE**
Inside a German war Zeppelin

Reader's story...

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Like many young men of the time, during World War Two Stanley William Rolph enlisted to do his duty 'For King and Country'. At Blackpool, September 1941, aged just 18, Stan joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve. In the coming years he would train and fly missions against Germany, from these shores and much, much further away.



In a letter home, dated the 2nd of August 1943, Stan writes of having a 'really marvellous time' with sun every day. He tells of visiting Tripoli and of being terribly homesick. Yes, Stan is in the Middle East. Other letters tell of visiting Cairo and the pyramids, of temperatures being 97 degrees in the shade, and of how the desert transforms and comes alive at night.

January 1944 sees Flight Sergeant Stanley Rolph return to our shores with a posting to Scotland. It's clear from letters home that 'leave' is still very rare and it's only letters from loved ones at home that keep the men's morale up. By May 1944 Stan is again posted to the Middle East, unaware that his day of departure will be the last time he sets foot on these shores.

On the 5th of June, 1944, a post office telegram arrives at home. No niceties, just a few blunt words informing loved ones that Stan is missing as a result of operations on the 3rd of June 1944.

The 9th of June brings another telegram. "The Air Ministry deeply regrets to inform you that your son is now reported to have lost his life as a result of air operations on 3rd June."

On the 13th of June a letter from the Air Ministry confirms the previous telegram. It tells how, during a transit flight from Lagos to Libreville, the Sunderland aircraft flew into a tornado and crashed into Lake Fernando, Fernando Po, British West Africa. All on board lost their lives, 10 young men gone. Stan was 21 years old.

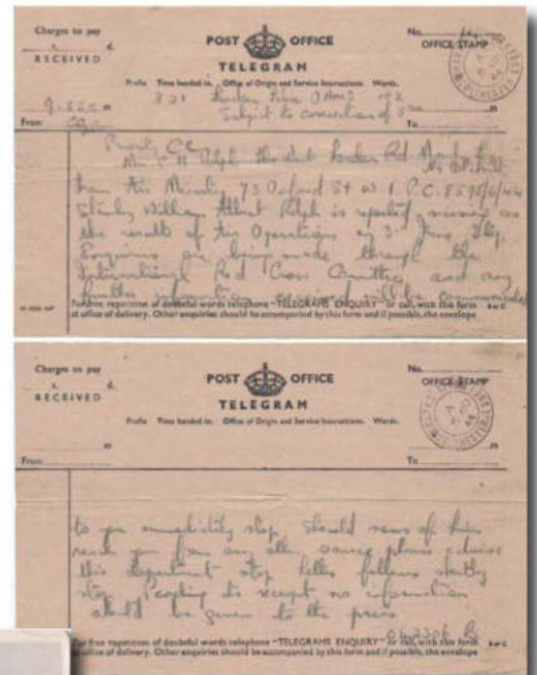
There then follows a letter from King George, stating that "the Queen and I offer our heartfelt sympathy in your great sorrow. We pray that your country's gratitude for a life so nobly given in its service may bring you some measure of consolation."

Another letter on the 14th of July brings photographs and a brief description of the funeral.

Ten young men, sons, lost to this world and buried in a place that many people would struggle to find on a map. It's impossible to imagine the pain of losing your son, but add to that the pain of never, ever, being able to visit his grave!

My Uncle Stan is my hero.

Jim Spurgeon





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Welcome

Thanks again for all your stories for last month's Special Edition of Forces War Records Magazine, we loved finding out more about your family research projects! We're back to our usual format for February, and to help you blast through those brick walls we'll be giving you a chance to learn about a potentially bountiful and often untapped genealogy resource, the Roll of Honour.

Also in this issue, ever wondered why anyone found airships, those slow and bumbling giants of the sky, remotely frightening during the Great War? Find out just how daunting they could be. If you're after a rollicking read, be sure to check out our 'Treasures' section to discover a periodical that trumpets the fun, accomplishments and sheer bravado of the 51st Highland Division in World War Two.

For those determined to jump-start their family tree in the coming year, we present a Q&A with celebrated researcher Roger Nixon and an inside look at the wonders of the Fleet Air Arm Museum to give you a shot of inspiration, as well as a short tutorial on how to find your Home Guard ancestor.

Last, but certainly not least, in these pages you'll find an infographic summarising two aviation medals, the caption competition, news and events and our expert advice section, plus more of your wonderful profiles of family heroes. Enjoy!

Nicki Giles (Editor)

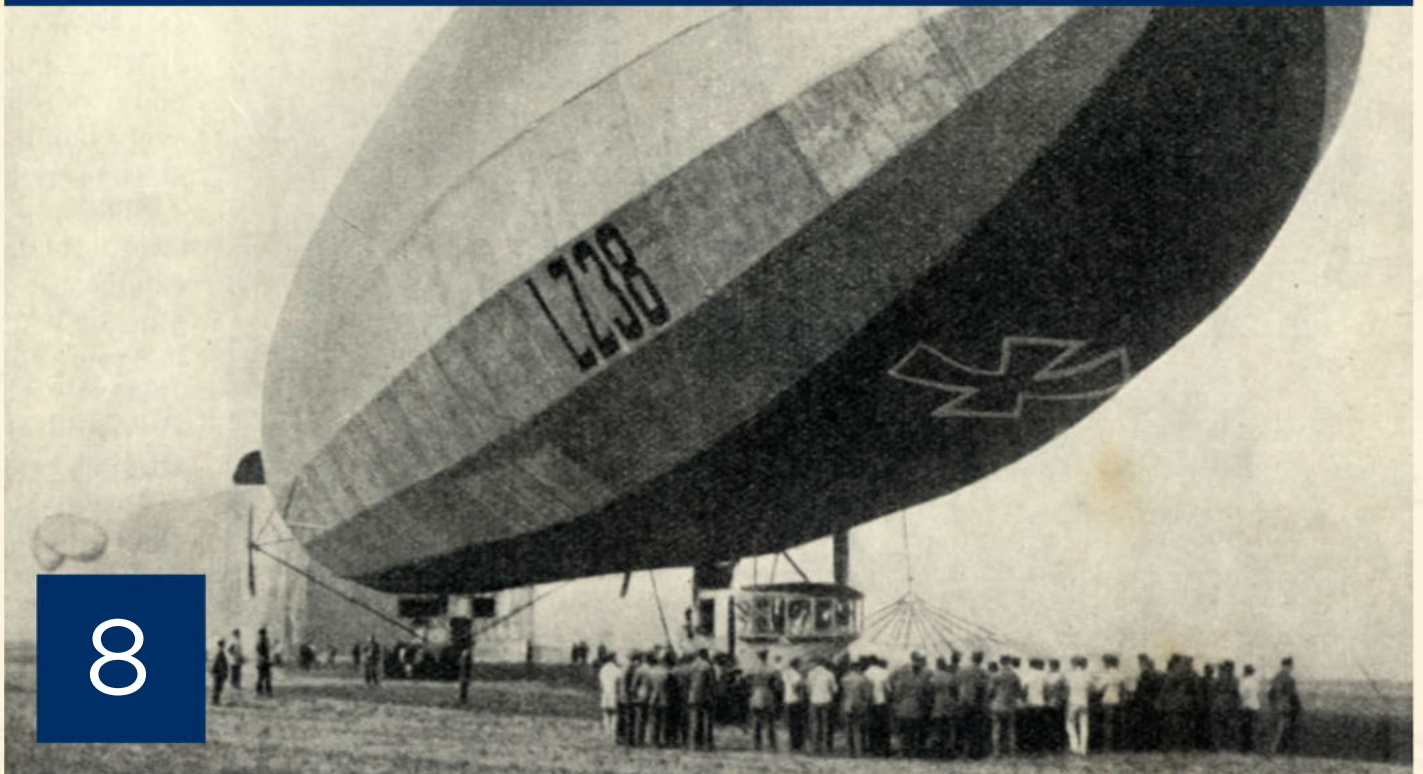


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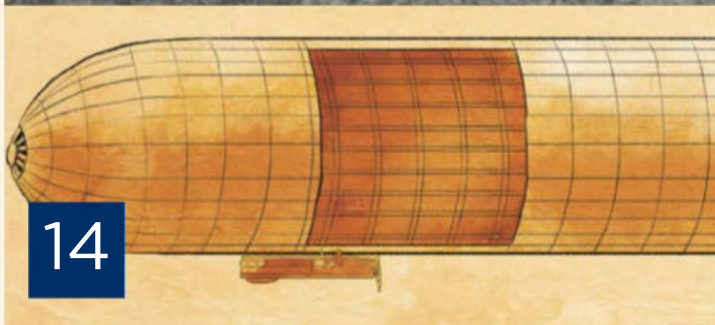


CONTENTS

8



14



22



4



ON THE COVER

6 QUICK GUIDE TO...

Finding your Home Guard ancestor

8 HISTORIC FEATURE:

Zeppelins attack: the age of the airship

14 GUEST FEATURE:

FROM HISTORY OF WAR MAGAZINE

Inside a German War Zeppelin

20 TREASURES FROM OUR ARCHIVE:

51st Highland Division in North Africa and Sicily

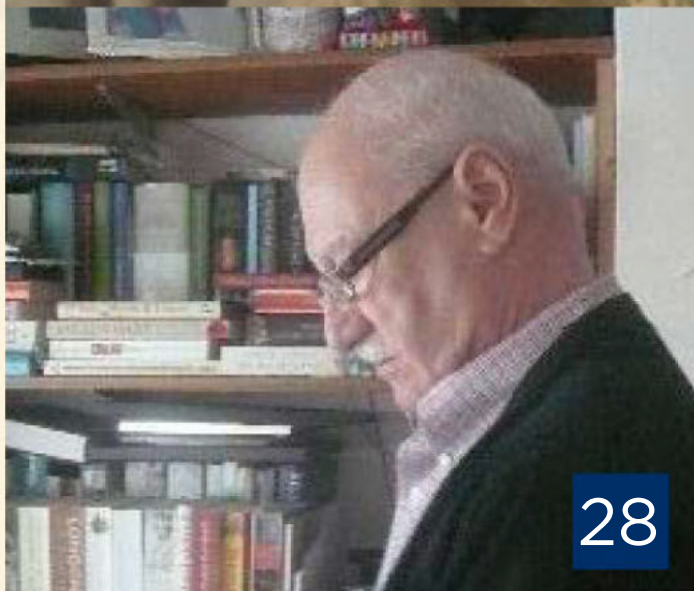
HELP WITH YOUR RESEARCH

22 HOW TO...

Use Rolls of Honour in your research

25 ASK THE EXPERTS:

Helping you to break through your personal research walls – we answer some of your genealogical queries



REGULARS

4 YOUR FAMILY HERO:

Your stories of notable ancestors resurrected by your research

13 INFOGRAPHIC AND COMPETITION:

The Distinguished Service Cross and Air Force Cross, PLUS join in on the 'Caption Competition' to be in with a chance to win one month's free membership to Forces War Records

18 INSIDE THE...

Fleet Air Arm Museum

28 MEET THE EXPERT:

Researcher Roger Nixon talks about military research

34 100 YEARS AGO...

On this day, remembering the Great War

37 ARCHIVE EXTRACT...

Another extract from our Historic Document Archive; Philip Parkinson - fighting the Japanese

HAPPENING NOW

16 NEWS BULLETIN:

News from the world of military genealogy

32 WHAT'S ON GUIDE:

Genealogy and military events taking place around the country

YOUR FAMILY HERO

Kenneth Victor John Cray

My grandfather was always unknown to me, as he died in 1954 before I was born. My father died in 1962 when I was six months old, so he never got to tell me about his parents. When Grandfather's daughter June died (my father's sister), I inherited a large collection of photographs and documents of distant relatives, some going back to 1840. Included were pictures of my grandfather, Kenneth Victor John Cray (AKA Jack or John). The pictures were fascinating, and so was his history, which is fairly well documented through many postcards and letters, some to his family and others to his future wife, Lily Gladys, whom he married at the end of WW1.

He served in the Boer War in the Imperial Yeomanry, 26th Coy, 7th Battalion, which I believe was a Dorset regiment. I have two photographs of him as a young man at this time (one attached). I cannot trace his birth certificate, though depending on which item of paperwork I have that you choose to believe, he was born either in 1883 or 1885. This makes him quite a young man

when he enlisted for the Imperial Yeomanry. I feel he might have lied about his age in order to enlist, as in one record he claims to have been born in Cork in 1883, when I believe he may have been born in 1885.

I only have one reference to his mother, a woman called Minnie Gooch who lived in or near Southend on Sea. Perhaps he was illegitimate, which is why I cannot trace his birth details. I have his death certificate and army records, which place his birth in 1885. I also have his medals from the Boer War (with Bars) and WW1, in which he served from 1916 with the Canadian Army's Expeditionary Force. It seems he was demobbed or left the

British Army after the Boer War, and went to Canada in or around 1903 and joined the Canadian Army Service Corps, where he became a driver/mechanic. I have many letters, postcards and photographs from this period which he wrote to his family back in England.

He was initially stationed at Sewell Camp in Manitoba, then enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force during WW1 and spent some time in France. I have some very good photographs that show the vehicles he drove in Canada and a great group photo of his unit at Sewell Camp. Canada seemed a big adventure to him, judging by his photographs and letters. He wrote often to my future grandmother, especially from France, and there is a lovely letter where he had not seen her for two years, and was talking about their impending meeting from the train. I would love to find out more about his origins and maybe some more information about his service in France, which is scant.

Chris Cray

Jack in 1902 in military uniform



Your personal hero

Have you discovered a hero that you are proud of while researching your family tree? If so, please tell us about them in about 250-500 words. If your story is chosen for publication in the magazine, you will win one month's free full subscription to Forces War Records.

To enter, e-mail stories@forces-war-records.co.uk, being sure to head your e-mail **'MY FAMILY HERO'**.



Jack Cray in Canada; 2nd from left

John William Gatén

My grandfather, John William Gatén, was born about 1871 in Jersey. His father, John Gatén, was at that time a bandsman serving with the 17th (Leicestershire) Regiment of Foot. John William Gatén joined the regiment (later the Royal Leicestershire Regiment) in 1885 as a boy soldier, serving in Jersey, Ireland and India.

A few months before the Boer War broke out in 1899, the Leicestershire Regiment was sent from India to Natal, South Africa. John William Gatén served in South Africa with the 1st Battalion from 1899-1901, and then the 3rd (Militia) Battalion until the end of the conflict in May 1902. The regiment took part in the attack on Boer positions at Talana Hill in October 1899 before joining the siege of Ladysmith (November 1899 – February 1900), during which they were besieged in the town under constant bombardment from the Boer guns on the surrounding hills. Following the relief of Ladysmith, the Leicesters joined the Natal Field Force, continuing the war through the Orange Free State and Transvaal during the summer of 1900. The 3rd (Militia) Battalion then volunteered for further service in South Africa and took an active part in the guerrilla operations under Kitchener, which ended the war. They returned to Leicester in October 1902. Sergeant Gatén was awarded the Queen's South Africa medal (QSA with Talana clasp) for his role in the battle of Talana and the King's South Africa medal (KSA) for service during 1901-1902.

On his return from South Africa he served for four years on the Permanent Staff of the Leicestershire Regiment in Leicester, before retiring in 1913. However, in August 1914 he rejoined at the outbreak of the First World War, aged 43. He joined the 6th (Service) Battalion at its formation at Leicester. The battalion landed in France in July 1915, seeing action on the Somme in 1916. Sergeant Major Gatén



Sergeant Major J W Gatén

served in France and Flanders until the end of the war, surviving unscathed. He was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. He retired from the army in 1918 as Company Sergeant Major.

John's death in 1926 was followed by an obituary in 'The Green Tiger' (the magazine of the Royal Leicestershire Regiment):

"With military honours, the remains of ex-C.S.M. John William Gatén (56) were laid to rest in the Welford Road Cemetery on Saturday afternoon, a large crowd of people assembling to see the cortege leave the Market Place. The coffin was covered by the Union Jack, and placed on a

gun carriage, which was drawn by six horses with outriders. Preceding the carriage were the Leicestershire Regiment Band and a firing party. As the cortege passed from the Market Place into Horsefair Street at the slow march, the band played Chopin's Funeral March. The deceased had a good military record and served for 32 years with the Leicestershire Regiment... At the graveside a bugler sounded the Last Post and the firing party fired a salute."

Ted Gatén



Click here if you've enjoyed reading this article

QUICK GUIDE TO...

finding your Home Guard ancestor



Home Guard patrol

Ah, 'Dad's Army'! The loveable characters from the BBC sitcom are forever ingrained in the British public consciousness.

Unfortunately, I missed the boat on this particular series by over a decade (not to make anyone feel old), so when people talk about Captain Mainwaring and Private Pike - "You stupid boy!" - I am left staring at them with a quizzical expression. However, before you all rip me apart for never having watched the iconic series, having seen the trailers I am genuinely excited about the new film coming to UK cinemas on the 6th of February this year.

But what about the real-life Home Guard personnel, your fathers, grandfathers and perhaps great-grandfathers, whose personal exploits have not been documented on the silver screen? Hopefully this tutorial will help you to find resources that will provide an insight into your ancestor's wartime service.

Along with most records, documents and materials relating to the Second World War, Home Guard records are predominantly held by the Ministry of Defence at this time. Collections relating to some individual units and battalions can be found through other sources, such as the Forces War Records database and the National Archives. Forces War Records currently holds three collections relating to the Home Guard:

- [Home Guard Officer Lists 1939-1945](#)
- [Home Guard Auxiliary Units 1939-1945](#) (not strictly Home Guard, the name was used as a cover)
- [Wiltshire Home Guard - Warminster Battalions](#)

The collection overviews summarise the role of these units, what information can be found on them and from which sources it was taken. Generally, you will

find the following details for each person mentioned in our Home Guard records:

- Name
- Rank
- Battalion
- Company
- Platoon
- Address
- Home Guard Service Number
- National Registration Number
- Date Home Guard service began

Home Guard Auxiliary Units have previously been covered in [Issue 1 of Forces War Records Magazine](#). The Auxiliary Units were not, in fact, made up of 'Local Defence Volunteers', to borrow the original government name for the Home Guard, but were instead composed of specially trained and equipped personnel charged with waging

a government sanctioned, uniformed guerrilla war against the invading Germans from behind enemy lines. The Home Guard, by comparison, was a second line of defence against invasion, intended to support the Regular and Territorial Army units by delaying the advance of German units. The Auxiliary Units were nominally attached to three Home Guard battalions, 201 (Scotland), 202 (Northern England) and 203 (Southern England), to disguise their purpose, and thus are included in this tutorial.

Outside of the Forces War Records collections, one of the most prolific sources for Home Guard information is of course the National Archives at Kew. Under reference [WO199](#), you will find hundreds of Home Guard-related documents, including unit histories, war diaries, muster instructions, regulations, defence schemes, all sorts really. It is well worth a look, particularly for the unit histories, which will give you an idea of the day-to-day running of the unit. Home Guard units were not required to write these unit histories, but as many of the officers were First World War veterans, they were used to the task and did so anyway. Details on the Home Guard Auxiliary Units can also be found under the same reference.

The best source for real, meaty information on the Home Guard however, as previously mentioned, is the [Ministry of Defence](#). The Ministry currently holds the original Army Forms filled in and signed on enlistment into the Home Guard/LDV and is one of the better 'jumping off points' to start your search, as it will provide the very basic information and is, with a few exceptions, just about the **ONLY** place this information exists, certainly for the other ranks. We explained how to contact the Ministry of Defence to order Second World War records in the 'Five Minute Tutorial' in [Issue 2 of Forces War Records Magazine](#),

then you'll just need to look for the header 'Home Guard or Regular Service'. For a £30.00 fee, provided you can produce proof that you are related to the Home Guard serviceman you are looking for, a search will be carried out.

A more far-flung resource might include your local regiment's museum, since the Home Guard came under territorial organisation, and as such counted as a regimental battalion, so it is very much worth contacting them to see what they have. In some cases

this might include photographs and documents. For general historical interest, [The Home Guard](#) website gives a very good breakdown of the history of the unit and its forebear, the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), as well as the equipment members used, the organisation, structure and so on.

As always, best of luck with your research, and remember, our Customer Support staff are always on hand should you need any further advice or help. Here is the trailer for '[Dad's Army](#)' (2016), in case you haven't seen it yet.

A member of the Home Guard receives rifle instruction



If you need help when using our site, you can always contact our **Support Team**, who are all incredibly knowledgeable. If you would like us to continue this tutorial in more detail, please feel free to send us **feedback**.

HISTORIC FEATURE

Zeppelins attack: the age of the airship

Very early on in the First World War, the aeroplane proved itself to be more practical than the airship as a 'weapon of war' – cheaper to produce, harder to spot and a much less substantial target to hit. However, the Germans retained immense faith in the odd-looking vessels right up until around 1916, partly because of a special national investment in their success, and partly because the airship was a uniquely intimidating intruder in enemy skies.

Main image: bombardment of Antwerp, 1914

Right: scene of destruction outside the Lyceum Theatre, London, in 1915 due to bombs dropped by Zeppelin L15



Picture this... a night that's blacker than black, since no light of any sort is permitted to shine out of the windows and disturb the darkness.

Despite hearing no approaching engine, and having no assailant in sight, the skin starts to prickle on the back of your neck as you instinctively feel that something is up there, watching, waiting. Then, without warning, the bombs start to fall. For the most part that would be all anyone was aware of... the fire, the chaos, and the knowledge that something truly terrible hung above Britain, hidden in the shadows. On the rare occasions, though, when the spotlights managed to catch a Zeppelin in their glare, its real power would be revealed. A ghostly mass, perhaps 700 feet long, hovering like a

vessel, LZ 1, was a modest 420 feet long, but Zeppelin's lighter-than-air ships really started to gain fame in 1906, after LZ 3 managed to stay airborne for an impressive eight hours. R G Grant explains in his 'Flight- 100 years of Aviation' that, so proud were the German people that their country was seen to be pioneering this impressive new technology that, when Zeppelin's larger LZ 4 was wrecked on the ground during a tour of the Rhine Valley in 1908, they all rallied around him. Von Zeppelin, who had financed the company himself, risked bankruptcy, but the German public donated six million Marks out of their own pockets to bail him out and help to keep his work alive. It's no

early ships were a little over 500 feet in length, able to climb to 4-6,000 feet weighed down, or 9,000 feet by discharging ballast, and capable of carrying 28-38 tons and reaching speeds of up to 60mph. Later they grew as large as 800 feet, went as high as 18,000 feet and edged up to around 80mph. Initially they could carry just 10 men and four to six machine guns, as well as a ton of bombs, and by 1916 they could take four large machine guns and six maxims, 28 men, plus four tons of bombs.

Their use was two-fold. First, as described, airships were initially sent on bombing raids. As symbols of terror, they were wonderfully effective. Shortly before the war began, in 1908, H G Wells had released 'The War in the Air', his military science fiction



grotesque bat over familiar buildings and streets, any one of which could be its next victim; the anti-aircraft guns, meanwhile, unable to reach it. Big enough to dwarf St Paul's Cathedral, yet deathly silent -and just as soon as it was caught in the light, it would melt away again into ominous nothingness.

The first airships - gas filled envelopes - were being experimented with as early as 1850, but according to Gary Sheffield's 'The First World War in 100 Objects', the German General Ferdinand Graf von Zeppelin was the first to really make a go of commercialising airships, starting his experiments in 1900 and getting better and better with each attempt. He was the first to successfully construct a rigid frame airship - thereafter dubbed the 'Zeppelin'. This first

wonder that the Zeppelin airship subsequently became something of a national icon.

By the time the Great War dawned in 1914, von Zeppelin had a fleet of airships that he had been using to transport passengers, ready to be converted into warships. In its most basic form, a Zeppelin airship was built with a solid aluminium frame supporting a fabric covering, with compartments filled with hydrogen arranged along the inside of the cylindrical shape, and the control car and engine suspended below. (Non-rigid airships, meanwhile, held up by an envelope of air on the outside, were known as 'blimps'.) According to Mark Adkin's 'The Western Front Companion',

book, in which German airships launched a terrifying attack on the people and buildings of New York City. The novel filtered into the national consciousness of the United Kingdom, making the possibility of an attack from the sky seem even more terrifying than it would have otherwise and branding the distinctive silhouette of the Zeppelin as something to be feared. So, what better to send to intimidate the British public that an airship? The night raids on the British mainland from bases in Belgium began on 19th January 1915, when two naval Zeppelins dropped bombs on Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and Sheringham, killing four and injuring 16. Each airship attack pulled British planes away from their duties at the Western Front towards home, weakening the position of Britain's army. The awesome psychological impact

HISTORIC FEATURE

Zeppelin LZ 38
about to ascend
from its base



Right: house in Southend
destroyed by incendiary
bombs dropped by Zeppelin
LZ 38, May 1915



Scene of destruction outside the Strand
Theatre, 1915 London, due to bombs
dropped by Zeppelin L15



Major Erich Linnarz,
Commander of the Zeppelin
LZ 38, and his lieutenants

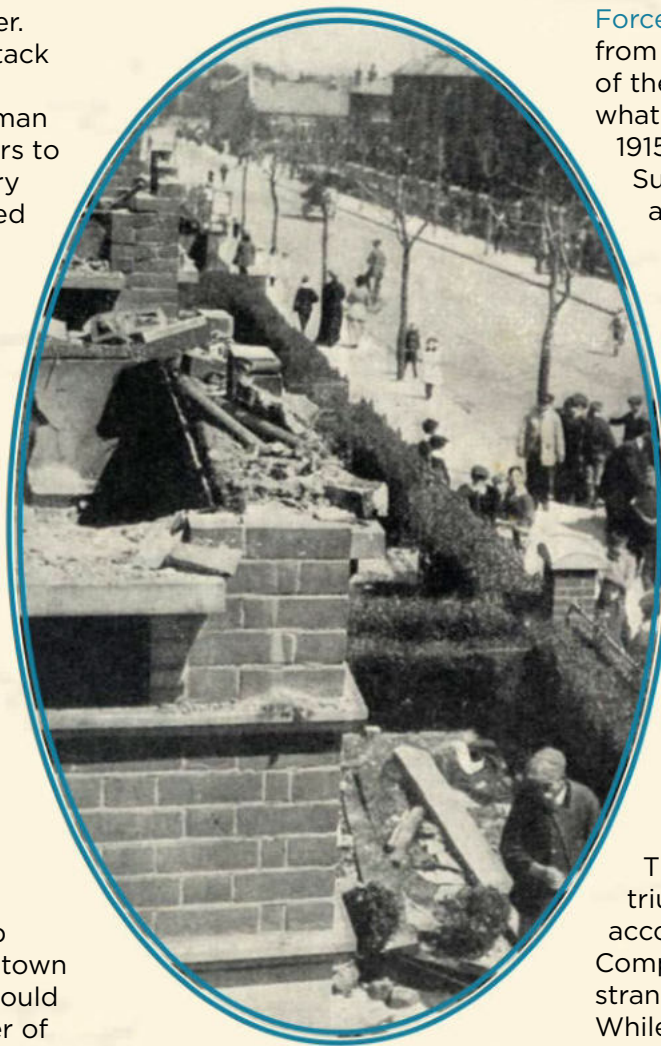
of the Zeppelin was evidenced in British recruitment posters from 1915, showing the dreaded silhouette hanging over St Paul's Cathedral, alongside the slogan, "It is far better to face the bullets than to be killed at home by a bomb. Join the army at once & help stop an air raid; God Save the King."

The other main use of airships was for reconnaissance, as they burned fuel more slowly than aeroplanes, so they could go further and last for longer. They helped to spot and attack submarines and minefields, thereby protecting the German ships, and acted as observers to determine how close artillery fire was falling to its intended target, allowing the aim to be adjusted to increase the probability of a hit.

Airships had many weaknesses, though – in fact, by the beginning of the war they were already starting to be phased out in most countries. Gary Sheffield's book points out that, even in 1914, 34 aeroplanes could be constructed with the money that it took to build just one airship. As bombers they lacked accuracy, making it difficult for them to hit any specific target, such as an aircraft factory, and often the wind dictated that they ended up over a completely different town to that intended. Weather could affect an airship in a number of ways, as it was effectively a large balloon. Heavy gusts and storms could easily cause it to crash, while heavy fog veiled markers, so that the airship risked losing its way and either running out of fuel or straying into the path of an enemy gun or aircraft. Navigating was also notoriously very tricky.

As well, airships made rather easy targets. For a start, they were huge, so a day-time raid was a no-starter. In daylight

they would be instantly spotted and hit, as four were in the first month of the war. They were also filled with hydrogen, a gas which, as well as being very light, is extremely flammable. By 1916, the development of incendiary bullets made airships an increasingly vulnerable form of transport. One good hit, and they risked lighting up like a Christmas tree, which didn't bode well for the unfortunate crew



members. Finally, weight made a big difference to how high and fast the aircraft could go, so even rain on the canopy could slow it down, and the more bombs it carried, the more vulnerable to enemy attack it became. To recap, the airship was expensive, bulky, difficult to manage, vulnerable to the elements and hard to navigate, if able to move faster and higher than the early

planes – but the British public didn't know that. They just saw a horrific and invincible foe hanging over them... until mid-1915 that is.

In June that year, 23-year-old Reginald Alexander John Warneford of the Royal Naval Air Service earned the Victoria Cross by proving, with the help of a French Morane monoplane, that this shadowy enemy was mortal after all. The citation for the award, transcribed on the [Forces War Records](#) website from the London Gazette entry of the 11th of June 1915, describes what happened: "On 7th June 1915 at Ghent, Belgium, Flight Sub-Lieutenant Warneford attacked and completely destroyed a German airship in mid-air. He had chased the airship from the coast near Ostend, and succeeded in dropping his bombs on it, the last of which set the airship on fire, but the explosion overturned the attacking plane and stopped its engine. Having no alternative, Flight Sub-Lieutenant Warneford had to land in hostile country, but after 35 minutes spent on repairs, he managed to restart the engine and returned to base."

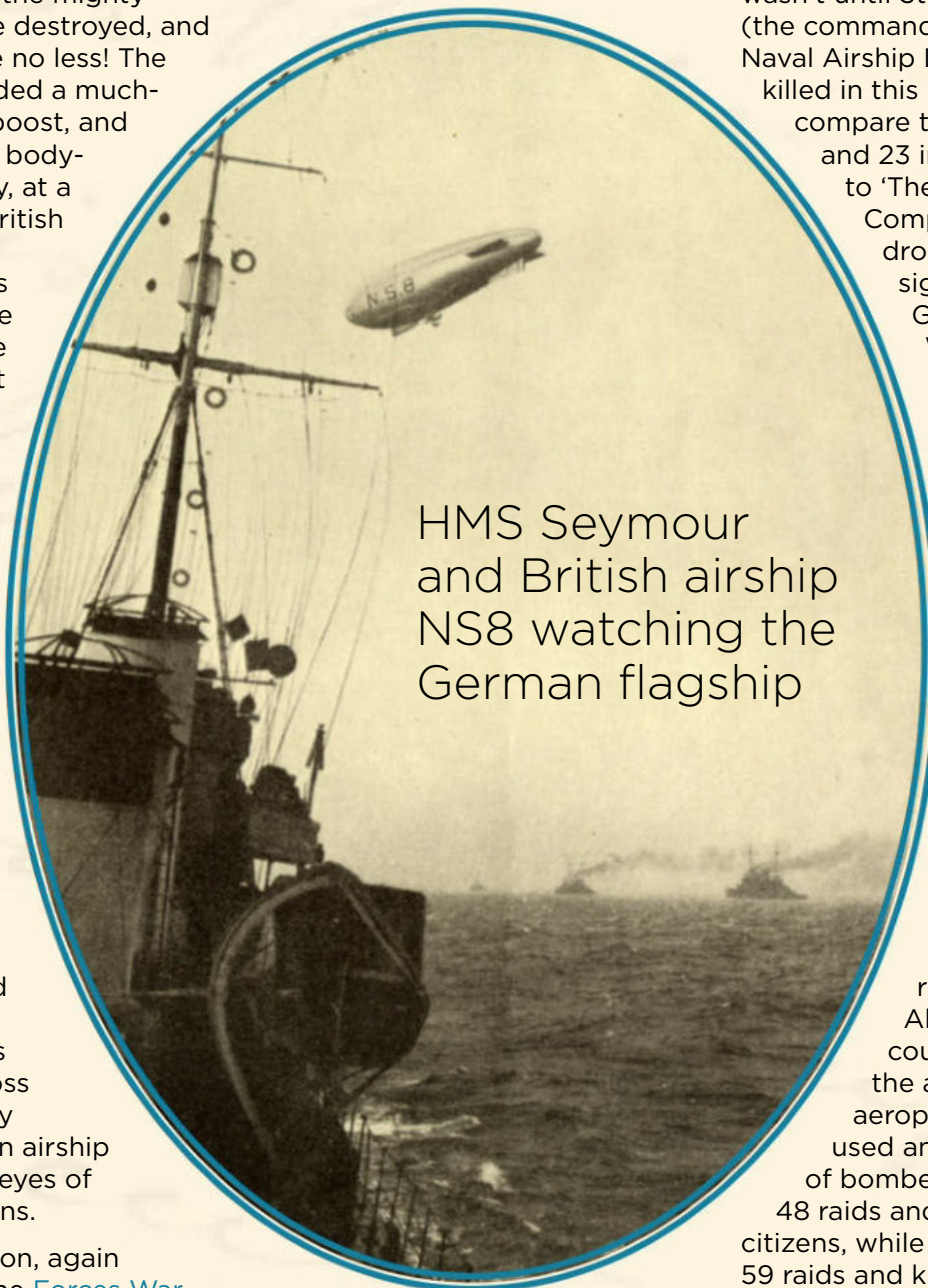
The encounter was a triumph in British eyes, and according to 'The Western Front Companion', produced one of the strangest war stories ever told. While his nine companions on LZ 37 burned in agony, Alfred Müller was in the front gondola, and avoided the worst of the flames. As the mighty ship crashed down through the roof of a building, Müller went with it – only to roll from the wreckage, unscathed, onto a soft bed. The charmed chap survived the war, opened a pub, and earned free drinks for life by repeatedly airing his story. Flight Sub-Lieutenant Warneford, meanwhile, was not so lucky. He lived just long enough to receive

the award, the 'most hearty' congratulations of King George V by telegram and the French Legion d'honneur, before being killed in a flying accident over Paris.

Still, his legacy lived on, as he had proved that the mighty airships could be destroyed, and by a single plane no less! The realisation provided a much-needed morale boost, and a corresponding body-blow to Germany, at a time when the British public was just realising that this war would not be finishing anytime soon. However, it was a different attack that placed the final nail in the military airship's coffin. On the evening of the 2nd and 3rd of September 1916, William Leefe Robinson, of the Worcestershire Regiment and Royal Flying Corps, continued Warneford's fine work, earning his own Victoria Cross in the process, by bringing down an airship right before the eyes of the British civilians.

Robinson's citation, again transcribed on the [Forces War Records](#) website, this time dated the 5th of September 1916, states: "On the night of 2nd/3rd September 1916 over Cuffley, Hertfordshire, Lieutenant Robinson sighted a German airship - one of 16 which had left bases in Germany on a mass raid over England. The Lieutenant made an attack at a height of

11,500 ft., approaching from below and closing to within 500 ft., and raked the aircraft (a wooden-framed Schutte Lanz) with gunfire. As he was preparing for another attack, the airship burst into flames and crashed in a field."



HMS Seymour
and British airship
NS8 watching the
German flagship

Muriel Dayrell-Browning, who saw Robinson's quarry, SL 11, plummet to the ground, is quoted in 'Flight: 100 Years of Aviation' as saying, "Those deaths must have been the most dramatic in the world's history. They fell - a cone of blazing

wreckage - watched by 8 million of their enemies."

Not that this was the end of German airship attacks on Britain; far from it. There were 11 more raids in 1917 and 1918, and the final attack of the war wasn't until 5th August 1918 (the commander of the German Naval Airship Department was killed in this last raid). Still,

compare that to 20 in 1915 and 23 in 1916, according to 'The Western Front Companion', and the drop in the airship's significance to

Germany is obvious. With other nations, the airship barely got off the ground. Britain hadn't started producing them until 1912, so had few airships to work with in 1914, and soon concentrated its developmental efforts on the aeroplane instead. The country mainly made use of small, soft-framed airships for the purposes of naval reconnaissance.

All in all, in the course of the war, the airship lost out to aeroplanes as the most used and effective form of bomber. Airships made

48 raids and killed 556 British citizens, while aeroplanes made 59 raids and killed 857. By World War Two, the airship had been entirely phased out as a weapon, and after a string of accidents, including the highly publicised Hindenburg Disaster in 1937, when 36 passengers and crew were killed in a ball of fire, the day of the airship - except in the US - was well and truly over.



[Click here if you've enjoyed reading this article](#)

The Distinguished Service Cross and the Air Force Cross

A Forces War Records Infographic

...for acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty whilst flying in active operations against the enemy.

...for acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty whilst flying, though not in operations against the enemy.



32,884 awarded since 1918

Both awards were established in June 1918 upon the formation of the Royal Air Force



3,857 awarded since 1918

One to get you started:
"British Army tests new urban camouflage uniforms."

Caption -
Competition -
what would you say?



Send your funny captions to magazine@forces-war-records.co.uk.
Winner to be announced on our Facebook page next month.
Last month's winner: **Dave Carter** with *"Anybody seen a camel?
I hate tea with no milk."*

GUEST FEATURE

HISTORY of WAR



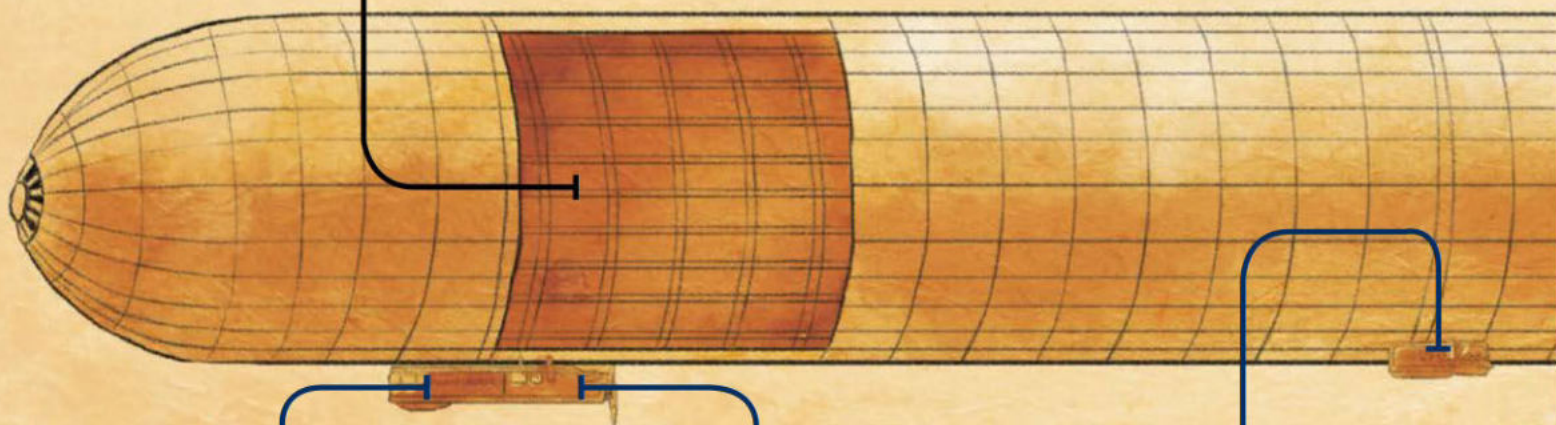
The terrifying world of the floating killing platforms, and the men who manned them miles above the ground

Gas bags

As opposed to blimps, which are merely pressurised balloons, zeppelins were kept aloft by thousands of bags filled with hydrogen gas. These were made from goldbeater's skin – which is actually the outer membrane of a cow's intestine. Primarily used as sausage skin, so much of it was demanded by the zeppelin factories that sausage production was suspended in parts of Germany during the war.

Both the German army and navy operated zeppelin crews during the war. Thanks to the efforts of Peter Strasser, however, its navy really pioneered and pushed the bombing of civilian targets in Britain.

Whichever branch of the services they came from, those who manned the zeppelins were essentially Special Forces. All were highly trained volunteers who conducted high-risk operations deep behind enemy lines, using state-of-the-art technology. Science was initially



Forward control cabin

This was the main flight deck where the airship commander, navigator, ruddermen, elevatormen and wireless operator would have worked. Most of the engineers were stationed in the rear gondola serving the main engines in an environment that was as noisy as it was dangerous.

Engines

These were housed on the gondolas. Although they varied in size and weight, a typical engine for later R-class airships was the six-cylinder Maybach HSLu. It produced 240hp and six were used to power the ship – one on the front cabin, two on the side gondolas and three on the rear. They could produce a top speed of 63 miles per hour and could propel the zeppelin to over 13,000 feet.

Cloud car

It may look like a high-risk fairground ride, but this was actually an observation platform. If a zeppelin became temporarily unaware of its position, an observer could be winched down from inside the hull up to half a mile below to spot for landmarks. He could then relate back to the bombardiers above by telephone. To make it safer, a lightning conductor was built into the suspension cable.

Inside A German War Zeppelin

on their side, and for a brief moment in 1915-16, during the so-called 'Zeppelin Scourge', the bombing behemoths they flew owned the skies. They were giants who simply couldn't be slain. However, as time went on and the technological balance began to shift, their missions became increasingly perilous.

Even without the emerging dangers of weaponry that could blast them out of the skies, however, the life of a zeppelin crewman was hazardous. Their workplace was a bizarre world of

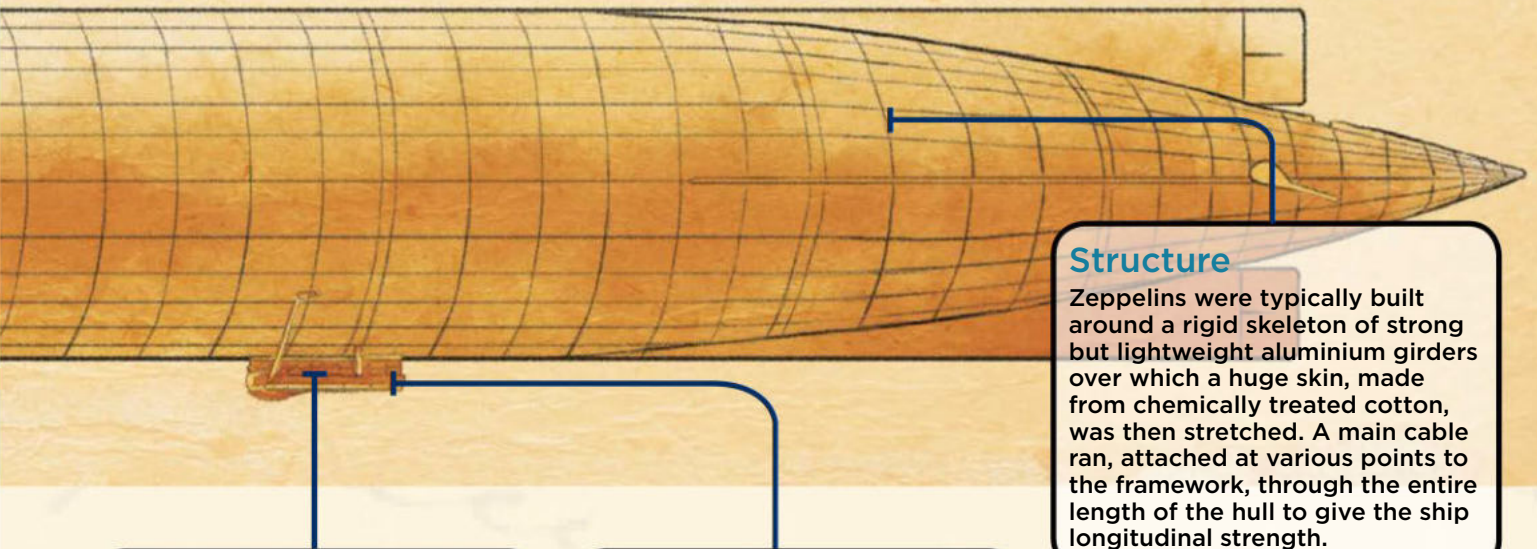
cogs and levers, suspended two miles above the Earth's surface by a battleship-sized balloon filled with highly flammable hydrogen.

While these floating death traps grew increasingly bigger as the war went on, crew sizes remained roughly the same as planners wrestled with equations about weight and altitude. On average, 20 men were required to steer these monstrous killing platforms across the Channel. Their roles included airship commanders, wireless operators, navigators,

ruddermen and elevatormen who would control direction and height, sail makers to repair tears and bullet holes in the hull, plus assorted mechanics and bombardiers.

All crewmen were also trained to use the on-board defensive machine guns, although these were often left behind or dispensed with once airborne, along with parachutes. Both items were simply considered unnecessary weight in an environment where being able to climb rapidly was your only real hope of surviving combat.

Illustration: Rebekka Hearl



Structure

Zeppelins were typically built around a rigid skeleton of strong but lightweight aluminium girders over which a huge skin, made from chemically treated cotton, was then stretched. A main cable ran, attached at various points to the framework, through the entire length of the hull to give the ship longitudinal strength.

Machine Gunner

There were usually several fixed points both on top of the zeppelin and beneath it where machine gunners, operating in temperatures as low as -30 degrees Celsius, could defend the airships against attack from fighters. Gunners wore helmets, gloves and cold-weather clothing once airborne, but often no parachutes.

Bomb bay

Located in the bottom of the hull, this could hold payloads that weighed up to 4,000 pounds. The bombs were usually a mix of larger high-explosives designed to shatter rooftops and smaller incendiary devices that could then be dropped into buildings to set them ablaze, as was the case with the London raid of 8 September 1915.

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<<NEWS BULLETIN>>



Going for the record!

Our WO417 collection reaches half a million records

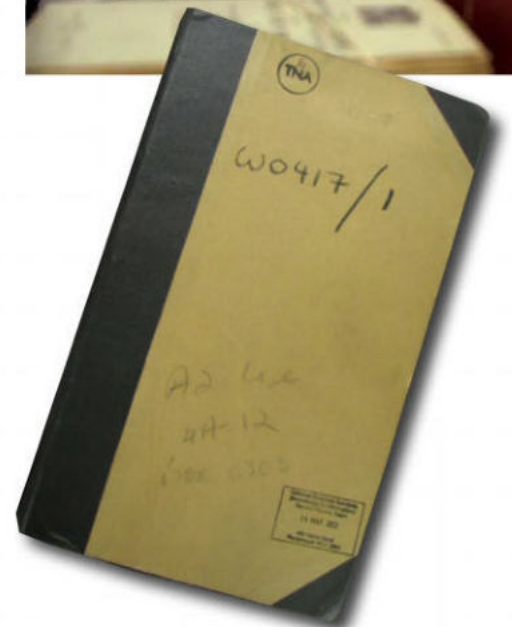
Back in October 2015 we celebrated having transcribed a half million records from our [‘Military Hospitals Admissions & Discharge Registers WW1’](#) collection. Not a month ago we also crossed another half million milestone of which we are very proud. Our [‘WWII Daily Reports \(missing, dead, wounded & POWs\)’](#) collection, transcribed from the records referenced WO417 in the National Archives, covers a wide range of potential topics from wounds and deaths to Prisoners of War and record updates or corrections.

This record set primarily deals with the British Army, though it touches on other services and other arms from the British Empire, and it covers the whole war from 1939-1945. With over 380,000 men killed during the war, 150,000 wounded and another 180,000 taken prisoner, it is a substantial collection, made more significant by the fact that

the Ministry of Defence currently holds virtually all the original documents for Second World War personnel, which will remain confidential until 2020 at the earliest.

Within this collection you will find information on the above topics, plus the date of the report and duty location. Reports of missing or captured personnel may be repeated later on with corrections or updates, updating men reported as ‘missing’ to ‘prisoner of war’, or ‘prisoner of war’ to ‘killed in action’, for example. All records in this collection also display the rank, service number and unit of the serviceman or woman mentioned.

One of the most significant features we have come across is that the service number is given for officers, a highly unusual occurrence, but one that could prove very fruitful for someone looking to apply to the Ministry of Defence for what records they have.





Email your name suggestions for our puppy to marketing@forces-war-records.co.uk by 3rd February

Veterans With Dogs

Did you know that Forces War Records was originally conceived thanks to members of our sister site, Forces Reunited, who asked how they might go about tracking their Forces ancestors? For a long time now Forces War Records and Forces Reunited have been intertwined, with staff working hard across both sites to bring you fresh, interesting content. We've got some very good news this month coming from Forces Reunited, which has negotiated a sponsorship package with a military charity called Veterans With Dogs.

You may have seen some of our updates on Facebook, but in case you haven't, Forces Reunited is donating £6,000 to Veterans With Dogs, allowing them to purchase, socialise, train and assign an assistance dog to a veteran suffering from Post-traumatic stress disorder or associated mental health conditions. Forces Reunited and Forces War Records members are invited to help us to name the puppy, which was born on the 6th of January 2016. Please email your suggestions to marketing@forces-war-records.co.uk. Hurry, though, the window for names will be closing on the 3rd of February. We will then pick our top three for a final vote.

Keep an eye out for updates on the Forces War Records website, Facebook and Twitter accounts (not to mention those for Forces Reunited). More cute puppy pictures inbound!

Digging the Trenches: the Archaeology of the Western Front

The [National Army Museum](#) has been hosting a series of celebrity talks with the [Army and Navy Club](#) this year, allowing pre-eminent military historians to discuss the social, economic and historical aspects and influences of the British Army.

On the 25th of February 2016, at 7pm, Andy Robertshaw, a military historian and author known for appearing on 'Two Men in a Trench' and 'Time Team' and for his work as military advisor on the Spielberg film 'War Horse', will take part.

Andy will be outlining the results of 30 archaeological projects in France and Belgium over the past 15 years and discussing the many challenges they have faced, from the discovery of unstable munitions and charged gas cylinders to site raids by illegal metal detectorists. Additionally, Andy's team has had the unique honour of locating and

identifying five 'missing' soldiers lost in combat, buried in unmarked or otherwise forgotten graves, and giving them the honourable burial they deserve. Finally, he will touch upon the phenomenon of 'dark tourism' and the draw of First World War battlefield sites to tourists and visitors.

At the conclusion of the talk Andy will take part in a Question and Answer session with the audience and a book signing.

Bookings

Standard tickets can be booked online or by telephone: 020 7730 0717.

Concessions:

SOFNAM (Society of Friends of the National Army Museum), student, military and senior places are available for £7.50. Proof of ID is required. Concessions can only be booked by telephone: 020 7730 0717.

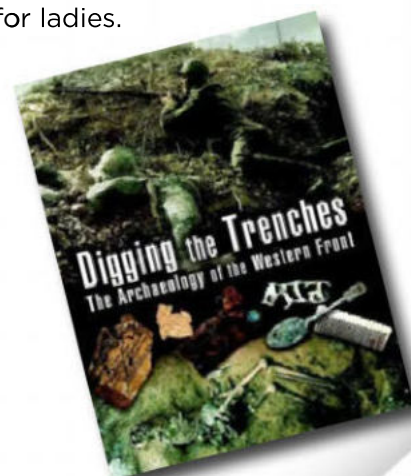
Dinner & Talk bookings:

The [Army & Navy Club](#) offers a two-course dinner in its Coffee Room fine dining restaurant before each talk. Combined 'Dinner & Talk' bookings can only be made by telephone: 020 7730 0717.

£32.50 - Standard

£30.00 - Concessions

Please note that formal attire is required when dining - a collar, tie and jacket for gentlemen and a tailored suit or dress and jacket for ladies.



INSIDE THE...

Fleet Air Arm Museum



David Morris, Curator of Naval Aircraft, Fleet Air Arm Museum

Q Lots of people have probably never heard of the Fleet Air Arm. Could you very briefly summarise its history, and what it does?

The Admiralty and Royal Navy have been interested in getting airborne from ships since before 1909, primarily for the purpose of observation and reconnaissance at sea. At this stage it was through the use of man-lifting kites, kite balloons and airships, but in 1910 the navy began experimenting with aeroplanes. From that point the RNAS (Royal Naval Air Service) was formed. At the end of WW1 the RNAS amalgamated with the RFC (Royal Flying Corps) to become the RAF (Royal Air Force). This was the situation until the late 1930s when the Admiralty and Air Ministry agreed that the navy needed to be in control of its own flying programmes and training. At this point the Fleet Air Arm was born, and it has remained the flying branch of the Royal Navy ever since. The FAA operates closely around the globe with the army, RAF and many other countries' military and civilian forces and has a flying history that now spans more than 100 years.

Q Apparently the museum is widely reputed to be the best naval aircraft museum in Britain. What would you say it does especially well in order to deserve this reputation?

As a museum purely devoted to the history of Naval Aviation we are now the largest in Europe, and it is very nice if people think we are the best. The strength of the collection (which is now vast) is owed to the consistently good curatorial staff that have collected and acquired objects thoughtfully over the last 50 years of the museum's existence. Accessibility is something we try to offer as much as possible, and being able to get quite close to the aircraft is something we are often praised for.

Q Apart from 102 aircraft, could you explain some of the exhibitions that a visitor can expect to see?

The museum typically has about half of its main aircraft collection on display at any one time. We aim to renew and refresh exhibition areas as often as possible using the collection's large objects (aircraft, vehicles, uniforms, medals, paintings, larger archive objects, etc.) to tell new or important stories. Recently we have staged exhibitions to cover 'The Channel Dash', 100 years of Naval Aviation, the Battle of the Atlantic, and 100 Years of Royal Naval Search & Rescue. Coming

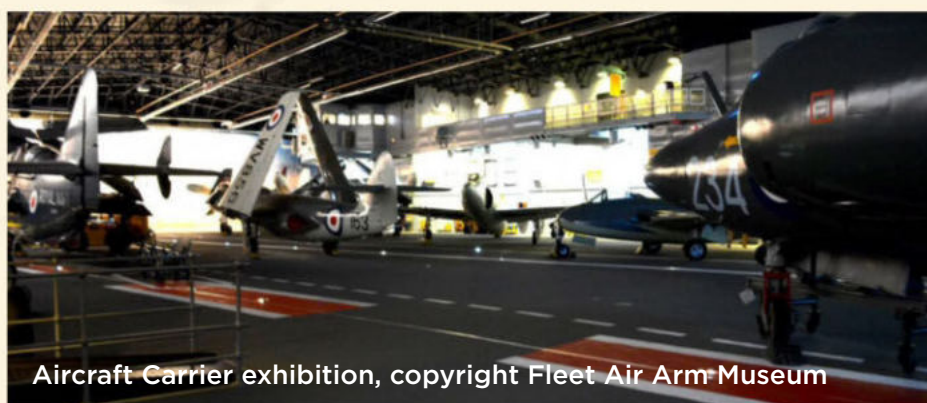
soon will be a small exhibition showing the first airborne use of air-to-air missiles, and an exhibition dealing with the Battle of Jutland.

Q Out of all the exhibits held at the museum, which is the one that visitors report they most enjoyed seeing and why?

The 'Aircraft Carrier Experience' is often very well reviewed. We took one of our main hangars and turned it into a representation of the aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal, complete with flight deck and ship's island, to portray more accurately what life is like at sea for FAA personnel. Concorde 002 is also a big favourite. It has no background naval history, but has been here with us representing British Aviation technology since it finished its flying trials in 1976.

Q Are there any hidden gems on display that visitors might miss on a hurried visit, but which you personally rate as well worth seeing?

I would have to say the Corsair aircraft KD431 in the WW2 exhibition hall. This was a project that we undertook in the year 2000 to investigate how much of the suspected original finish remained intact beneath a 1960s repaint of the aircraft. The project took five years to complete in between our other museum work, carefully picking and peeling all of the 1960s paint away and



Aircraft Carrier exhibition, copyright Fleet Air Arm Museum



Corsair KD431,
copyright Fleet Air Arm Museum

leaving the original WW2 paint intact. It was a cross between conservation, fine art restoration and forensic science! The end result was to reveal an almost complete time capsule aircraft that still existed beneath this later paint finish.

Q Which, out of the many records held at the museum, are the most sought after by genealogists?

The documents most sought by genealogists are our World War One records of service and other service-related documents, of which we hold about 2 million covering around 600,000 individuals. Among our unique documents are the engagement papers for the Royal Navy and enrolment papers for the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve. For those who served during World War One, we hold the majority. We also hold original Royal Marine Attestation Packs, again for those serving before, during and just after World War One. The National Archives at Kew hold a complementary set of Attestation papers, so your RM ancestor is likely to be at Kew or with us.

It's worth noting that records for personnel serving after the 1920s, through World War Two and beyond, are still held by the Ministry of Defence, so we are unable to deal with enquiries for WW2 Service Records.

Q A person can't just walk in off the street and sift through your records library; could you explain what sort of planning and preparation one would need to do before visiting?

Access to all of our records is by prior appointment only and we have limited research space. Email fleetairarm.enquiries@nmrn.org.uk to request an appointment. We are not a

lending or a browsing library, so it is essential to give as much information as possible about your research subject in advance of any visit, so that we can establish 'IF' we have any material that will help you and we can gather together information and images for you. If we think your visit will not be fruitful, we will advise you at that stage. For our WW1 service-related documents, we do operate a copying service. Requests can be made by email or by letter, but we do not accept telephone enquiries. Also in demand, but not available remotely, are some Fleet Air Arm Squadron Record Books (official records) and Line Books (very unofficial records) from World War Two through to 2007, aircrew flying log books and technical aircraft manuals. Some of our records and photographs are subject to Data Protection or Intellectual Property Rights legislation (e.g. copyright), so there are restrictions on the use that can be made of such material. Having said that, we work with many authors and private researchers to provide images from our archive of around 800,000 photographs.

Q Is there a particular hero of the Fleet Air Arm (or one of its incarnations) that has stood out for you in the course of your own studies?

Working on an exhibition and book project to mark the 100th Anniversary of the first use of an aircraft for a search and rescue mission, for which a Victoria Cross was awarded, made me look more closely at the story behind it. The rescue involved Royal Navy pilot Richard Bell-Davies, who landed his small bi-plane on rough marshland in front of advancing Bulgarian troops to pick up a downed fellow pilot, Lt. Gilbert Smylie. Landing his aircraft on the rough terrain was dangerous enough, but doing it under fire and making a safe take off, again across rough and unknown terrain, demonstrated incredible bravery,



Richard Bell-Davies' VC,
copyright Fleet Air Arm Museum

airmanship and luck! Even more remarkable, the aircraft was a single seater and Smylie had to crawl in through the cockpit, down past Bell-Davies' feet and the aircraft's dashboard and squeeze himself into a tiny space under the aircraft dashboard. The more you actually think about this sequence of events and the speed at which they accomplished it, the more deserved the award becomes. A selfless act by Bell-Davies with an extremely slim chance of success.

Q On your website there is information about a reserve collection, which holds 30 aircraft, 2 million records and 30,000 artefacts, but which sometimes only opens once a year. Why so rarely?

Our reserve collection storage facility is designed to be a state of the art store for all of our reserve collection rather than a display hall. There are cost implications to opening it (lights, staffing etc.) so we need to be mindful of that running cost. We do however, enjoy making it as available as we can, as people are interested to see behind the scenes. We are currently re-evaluating how we can make more open days available whilst still making it cost effective.

Q If people make the special journey to visit this reserve collection, what are they generally hoping to see?

Usually the reserve aircraft collection, but part of the new thinking will be to make some days available when small groups of visitors may be able to be guided through the smaller object archive stores.

TREASURES

from our Historic Documents Archive

51st Highland Division in North Africa & Sicily

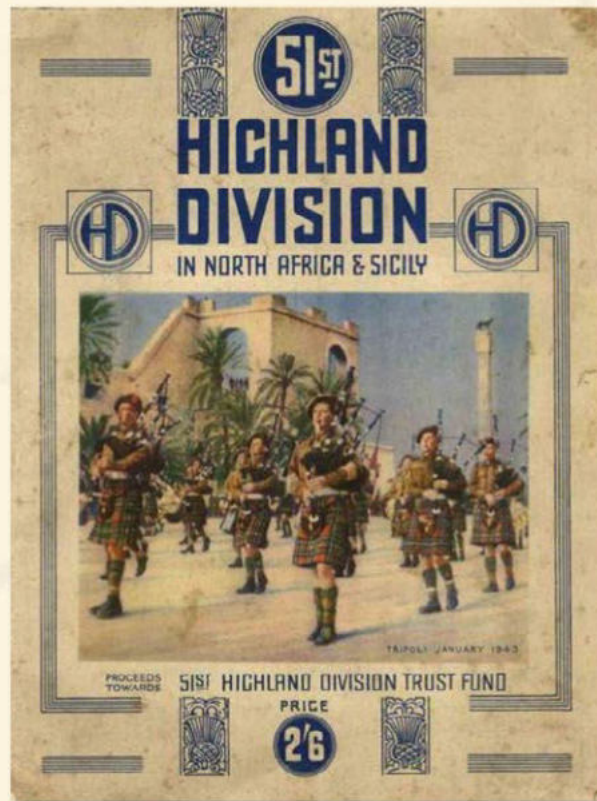


The Highland Division's famous logo

During the First World War the 51st Highland Division, called the "Ladies from Hell" by the Germans that faced the kilted regiment in the trenches, became renowned for its men's bravery and ability in combat as they served with the British Expeditionary Forces in France. The division was raised in 1908, upon creation of the 'Territorial Force' as a result of reforms of the army under the Secretary of State for War, Richard Burdon Haldane, and was one of 14 Divisions of the peacetime TF. It was mobilised in August 1914, and these Territorials were sent to France in April 1915. The 51st Highlanders' actions are too numerous to mention, and at the great German offensive of 1918 they sustained enormous losses. Some of their Battle Honours included the Battle of the Somme (1916), the Battle of Arras (1917) and the Battle of Cambrai (1917).

In the Second Great War of 1939-45 the 51st Highland Division upheld the many glorious traditions of a unit that fought with such valour in the Fields of Flanders in 1914-18, and many expressed the desire to show tangibly their appreciation to those men. So, the 51st Highland Division Trust Fund was formed as an opportunity help benefit the officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and men of the division.

The release of '51st Highland Division in North Africa & Sicily' saw all proceeds go to this trust fund, and this publication is now saved within the Forces War Records Historic Documents



Archive for all to view and read. If your ancestor was in this division, which included the regiments of the Seaforth Highlanders, Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, Gordon Highlanders, Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment), Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and Middlesex Regiment (Machine Gun Battalion), I would recommend this publication for further reading. Just like an official War Diary that can be found within the National Archives, publications such as the '51st Highland Division in North Africa & Sicily' give a truly wonderful insight into the movements, actions, gallantry, operational histories and men of the war.

It was printed in the year 1943 by D MacKenzie & Co, Glasgow, and contains wonderful trade advertisements from that era, numerous photographs of the division and a super overview of what they were doing in Africa

and Sicily by Captain James Borthwick, Officer-Observer, 51st Highland Division.

Captain James Borthwick was one of the original 'Officer-Observer' journalists in uniform, who remained soldiers, although their primary weapons of war were their typewriters. He joined the infantry in action, getting stories direct from the men who fought. So, if soldier John McKay of the division takes part in an action with his section, the Officer-Observer gets the story; it appears in his local paper, then his wife, his relatives and his friends read it. They write to John, and tell him how proud they are. John in turn tells his section, his platoon,

his battalion, and the effect on morale is incalculable.

Captain James Borthwick joined the division in Egypt in the black days of August 1942, with Rommel's armies at the gates of Cairo, and it was his job to be there when the division went into action. One might even say that Captain Borthwick saw more of the division's battles than any member, as he moved about from one battalion to another, whether it belonged to the Black Watch, the Camerons or any other regiment.

Officer-Observers were regarded as experimental in the early days of the Second World War, though Captain Borthwick interpreted his brief as "Front Line Reporter" literally, and in his fifteen hundredweight truck he went into action with the Jocks at Alamein, Mera Brega, Mareth, Wadi Akarit, Enfidaville, Sicily and Italy. Authentic Front Line stories of the battle from a

soldier's point of view created a new type of journalism, and established observers in public favour. It was largely due to Captain Borthwick that the reconstituted Highland Division was put firmly on the map, and his stories ranked among the finest despatches of the war.

A rousing account of the Seaforth Highlanders can be found in '51st Highland Division in North Africa & Sicily', as they nearly fell into a trap at the town and monastery of Francofonte. One German jumped in front of Lt. Cochrane from Ibrox with a Tommy Gun. "You're my prisoner," he told him. "Am I hell," answered Lt. Cochrane, and shot him dead. Captain Botherwick also spoke to Hutton Bremner, the Motherwell footballer. He had been a prisoner for a short time. "How did you get away?" Botherwick asked. "Waited till my sentry turned his back, hit him on the head with a stone, and walked through the German lines," he replied.

Sergeant Dick Primrose of Bridgeton entered the town just before dawn, to find some soldiers being marched through the streets. He could see they were Scots, but they didn't answer his greetings. Then he noticed that they were under escort, with a German officer at their head. "It's alright, lads. They're surrounded. Take away their arms," he said, menacing his revolver. The tables were turned, and the captors were made captives. It was only later that Dick Primrose revealed that he was alone, and his revolver was empty!

It's not just stories of battle that are covered in this publication, there is much to prove that the men of the 51st Division were more than just soldiers. The Gordons dealt mercilessly with the Nazi tyrants, then went on to set up a medical post for

the poor people dying from starvation in the villages on the slopes of Mount Etna. In one Sicilian district Dr Ranald Dewar from Aberdeen walked six miles up a hillside to help a young mother give birth to her baby in a cave, and many an Arab or Jewish kiddie or Sicilian mother had their first decent meal in a long time out of a Gordon's mess tin.

The popular Eighth Army nickname of the division was the "Highway Decorators", because they signed the routes with large HDs cut out of tin and stuck on a pole. Or, if a house was available, HD was painted on it in large red lettering, with an arrow pointing in that direction. The morning the Gordons entered Tripoli General Montgomery was with them. "Where's the red paint?" was one of his questions. None could be found, so he went to a hospital and got a supply there and when the first rays of the sun lit up the main square of Mussolini's jewel of Africa, a four foot high HD in red lettering adorned the main wall of the buildings in the main square.

So, if your military ancestor served in WW2 with the 51st Division, why not delve into our Historic Documents Archive and read more of this interesting publication? There's nothing quite like reading a personal account of war, as history unfolds, through the eyes of somebody who was actually there.

Read the rest of '51st Highland Division in North Africa & Sicily' for free [here](#).

Below: Captain James Borthwick, Officer-Observers



Troops of the Highland Division cleaning their rifles in the desert

Delve into our Historic Documents Archive to discover what your ancestor might have gone through, become more knowledgeable about history, and learn more about some of the fantastic characters involved in war. Books, newspapers, albums and periodicals, they're all there. What are you waiting for?

HOW TO...

use Rolls of Honour in your research



One of the many pictures to honour the fallen in the 'British Jewry Book of Honour'



One of the huge number of additional photos in 'British Jewry Book of Honour'

A Roll of Honour is a list of people whose deeds or achievements are recorded, or who have died in battle, especially those from a particular locality or organisation.

Usually, with military records, they detail those killed. The first secret that the successful researcher will learn is that there are more of these rolls than they might ever have imagined, from all walks of life. Some commemorate just a handful of servicemen, others hundreds of thousands. Just a few of those held here at Forces War Records headquarters are the 'National Union of Teachers War Record, 1914-1919', 'List of Etonians who fought in the Great War MCMXIV MCMXIX' (and a twin volume for World War Two), 'Roll of Honour 7th Battalion (Territorial Force) Hampshire Regiment 1914-1919', 'Royal Navy Roll of Honour World War 1 - 1914-1919', 'The Tank Corps Book of Honour', 'British Jewry Book of Honour' and 'Malta Defiant & Triumphant- Rolls of Honour 1940-1943'. So, industrial associations, educational establishments, specific units,

wider services, regiments, religious communities and selected localities (worldwide) might all have Rolls of Honour available to browse if you know where to look for them.

They are held in many different places. Online archives, like our own, research libraries, local or regional libraries (they might hold old issues of local papers that have printed Rolls of Honour), the National Archives, regimental museums and their websites (for example, the [Tank Museum](#) offers a digital version of the Royal Armoured Corps' Roll of Honour), sites of historical interest (such as Bletchley Park) and national museums all hold such rolls. Often they'll be held where you might not expect them – HSBC Bank, for instance, recently donated its copy of the [Midland Bank Roll of Honour](#) to the Imperial War Museum to form part of the 'Lives of the First World War' collection. Of course, once one knows of the existence of such a Roll of Honour it is, in this digital age, relatively easy to track it down. The trick is knowing to look for it in the first

place, and of course, figuring out that your ancestor will be on it! Take a look at Issue 1 of Forces War Records Magazine, our April 2015 issue, if you're not sure [how to get started](#) in your research. Once you have your facts lined up – where your ancestor was born, where they worked, which church if any they attended, which unit they were in etc. – you'll be in a better position to search for Rolls of Honour that might include them.

What you will be able to add to your research, having located such a document, varies hugely according to which roll your ancestor is included on. An example of rather scant resource is the 'Royal Navy Roll of Honour World War 1 - 1914-1919', available as a book by Don Kindell. It is a massive volume containing thousands of names, so makes a great starting point for a general study of naval personnel, but if you're searching for one specific person you're likely to find it short on detail. It does contain two useful appendices, a list of naval abbreviations and a very brief list of dates and incidents in

which naval personnel perished (e.g. 1914, 16th December, raid on Hartlepool, no ships lost (11)). Otherwise, all you'll find is name, rank, unit, Service Number, ship and date of death; useful titbits all, but nothing you won't find in a host of other locations.

On the other hand, if you discover that your ancestor is included in 'Butler College (Indianapolis) in the World War', you're in luck. The book, put together by one of the college's professors, Katharine Merrill Graydon, commemorates just 16 fallen students, so the roll actually only takes up a fraction of the book. Nonetheless, each of the dead is treated reverently. Since the book was put together in 1922 it must have been easy to collect information, especially as the college would have had access to the boys' families. There is a photograph of each one, as well as from ½ to 2 ½ pages of extra information, including not only their name, age, date and location of death and burial location, but a short synopsis of their complete military career, including awards won and citations for those awards, in some cases a first-hand account of the circumstances surrounding their death, and a record of tributes paid to them.

Thus, we learn that Lieutenant Hilton U. Brown, Jr. of the Seventh Field Artillery was tall and athletic, with bright cheeks and a merry twinkle in his eye, and that he was not only patriotic and courageous, but that he "had a sense of protectiveness for one younger or for one less equal of endurance". We hear that Lieutenant Kenneth Victor Elliott of Machine Gun Battalion, Fifty-eighth US Infantry, liked a good book, and that on his way to training camp he much impressed a man he met on the train, to whom he chatted "mostly of the sea - of the rush of great waters and the stars and the way of sailor folk... the poetry of the sea had entered his soul, the mystery and wonder of it." We also learn that Sergeant Henry Reinhold Leukhardt, who keenly

felt the fact that he had been demoted on transferring from the air force to the army and longed for a commission, was indeed commissioned on the afternoon before his death, but did not live long enough to know it.

Just as the level of detail in different lists of the fallen can vary hugely, so can the quality and quantity of the information accompanying said list. The Roll of Honour included in 'The Tank Corps Book of Honour' (compiled from official records and edited by Major R.F.G. Maurice of the late 13th Battalion, Tank Corps) is very stripped back, including just the name, substantive rank, Service Number (in the case of the 'other ranks') and home town of each man included, but the rest of the book is a veritable gold mine of information on the regiment.

Below: Hilton Brown, Jr., the athlete (top right), and Kenneth Elliott, the reader (bottom right), 'Butler College in the World War'

Bottom: Henry Leukhardt, (bottom right) never to receive his commission, 'Butler College in the World War'



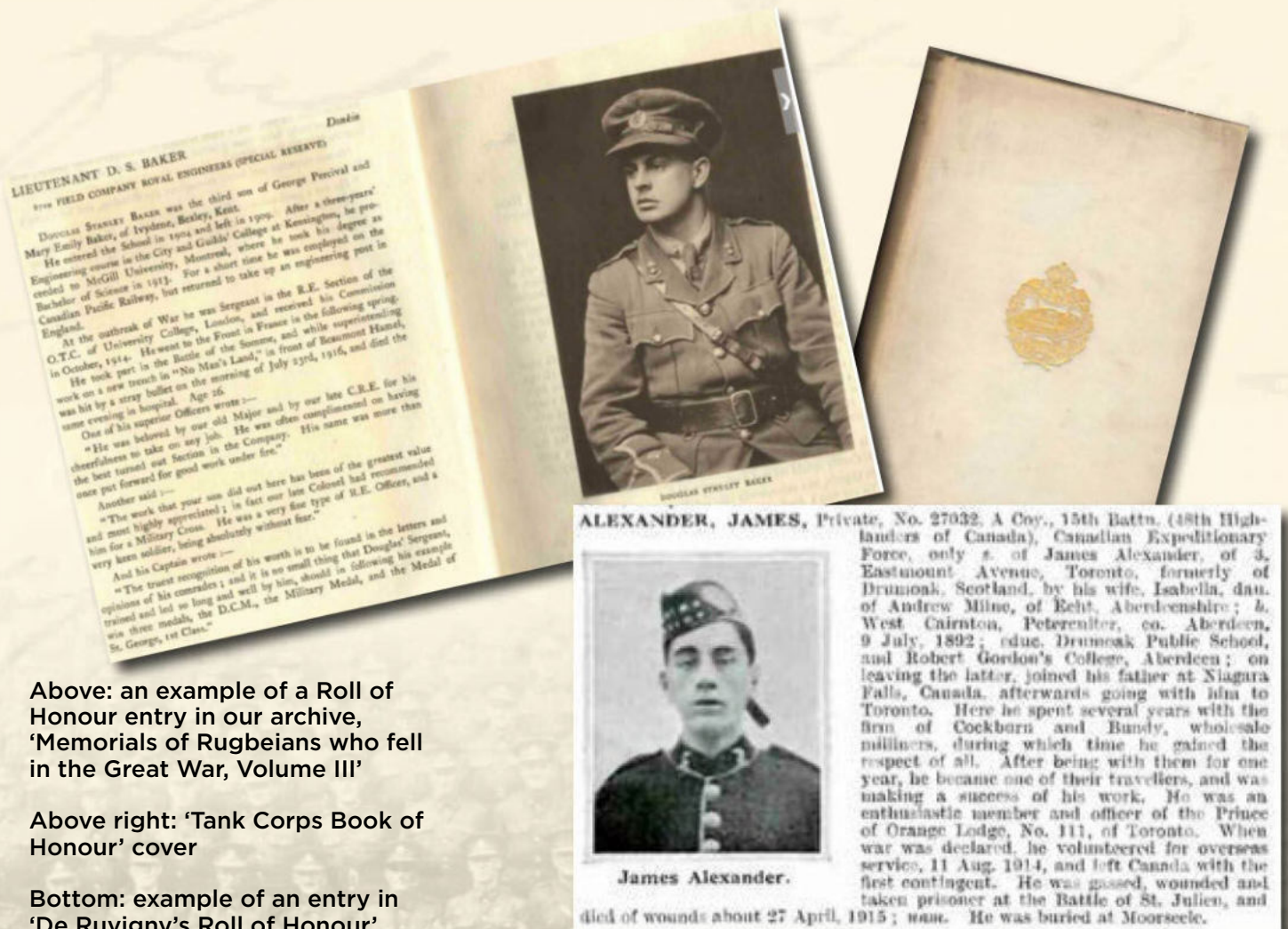
HOW TO...

A particularly interesting chapter presents extracts from the despatches of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig that reference the Tank Corps, which contain details of the tactics, enemy defences, timing and outcome of various campaigns that the tanks took part in. Another chapter is made up of complimentary messages received by the corps from British and Allied commanders, while a third lists Special Orders issued Major General H.J. Elles, who famously commanded the corps in France. Finally, battle honours awarded to members of Tank Corps are carefully listed, along with their citations. If your ancestor belonged to the Tank Corps you would be foolish not

to delve into this remarkable book, which gives a rich flavour of what life would have been like for those in the unit.

To get you started, our website holds a large number of scanned Rolls of Honour, some of which are very rare, including 'The Tank Corps Book of Honour', the 'British Jewry Book of Honour' (which includes so many photographs that we've had to list the text and the images separately just to make the document manageable), 'Glasgow University Roll of Honour 1914-1918', seven volumes of 'Memorials of Rugbeians who fell in the Great War' and four volumes of 'De Ruvigny's Roll of

Honour 1914-1919', which holds biographies for over 26,000 of the casualties of the Great War, to name just a few. The data from several more of these valuable rolls has been uploaded as [collections](#) for searching in our database, including the 'Bristol Grammar School Roll of Honour & Record of War Service', 'The Barnsley Pals Roll of Honour', 'Army Roll of Honour (UK) 1939-1945' and excitingly, exclusively to our site, 'Prudential Assurance Roll of Honour 1914-1918' and 'The Union Bank of Scotland Roll of Honour 1914-1918'. Have a look, and you'll soon see just how useful Rolls of Honour can be in helping to enrich your research.



Above: an example of a Roll of Honour entry in our archive, 'Memorials of Rugbeians who fell in the Great War, Volume III'

Above right: 'Tank Corps Book of Honour' cover

Bottom: example of an entry in 'De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour'

ASK THE EXPERTS

Sirs,

Over the past three years I have been writing about Hildenborough for my local magazine. In conversation, one of the local families explained to me that their mother talked about a bunker located on the side of a wood; watching it being constructed, and then her mother (their grandmother) taking tea to the soldiers stationed in the bunker.

I have walked the site, but there is no visible outline of a bunker. We have run a metal detector over the site too, but still no success. I have contacted the TA (Territorial Army), they told me to go away. I have also contacted the National Trust and English Heritage, but both of them said, as it is not a designated site, they are not interested. I then moved onto Kent Archaeology Society and asked them, but all they said was "duly noted".

Can you inform me who I should next turn to?

I look forward to your reply,

Regards,

Tim Asquith



Above: pillbox on Taunton stop line

Right: British defensive pillbox (or bunker)

Dear Tim,

We will do our best to help point you in the right direction.

Firstly, according to research carried out in the late 1970s by journalist Henry Wills, who later published 'Pillboxes: a Study of UK Defences 1940' in 1985, and to local surveys by the 'Defence of Britain Project', some 28,000 pillboxes and other concrete fortifications were constructed in the UK, of which about 6,000 still survive. The project resulted in the discovery of many relevant records, and I would recommend consulting the following books for further information:

- 'Pillboxes: a Study of the UK Defences 1940' by Henry Wills
- 'Pillboxes of Britain and Ireland' by Mike Osborne
- 'Defending Britain: Twentieth-Century Military Structures in the Landscape' by Mike Osborne

Next, I would contact the teams that run the websites www.pillboxesuk.co.uk and www.pillbox-study-group.org.uk, as both have a great deal of information that could be useful to your quest.

Additionally, you can contact the Council for British Archaeology, who from April 1995 to March 2002 ran the 'Defence of Britain Project' to create a publicly accessible online database.

Other places I would try are the [Hildenborough Library](#) or council [archives](#), to look for old newspapers from that era that might mention or show pictures of the bunker's construction, or possible plans and details, and the 'Discovery' catalogue on the National Archives' website.

All the best with your search,

Regards,

Neil White



ASK THE EXPERTS

Dear Sir,

My father's full name was Christopher William Mann, b. Norwich 05.02.1896. According to employment records he began work as a 'Mental Nurse' just before being called up in June 1916, returning to duty on 15.03.1923. He joined the Norfolk Regiment, Service Number 26811, and rank Private. The only record of his service I can find is in the form of two telegrams, one (dated 22.05.1917) reporting that on 09.05.1917 he had been wounded. Following this is the other telegram (dated 06.07.1917), stating that he had been admitted to the 7th Canadian Hospital, Etaples, on 29.06.1917. A friend has contacted the Canadian Records Department, but they were unable to assist, referring me back to Kew. It was my enquiry for a Medal Card that showed he apparently had the RAMC service number 140641, rank Private. There is no further information.

Additionally, found in his papers were several photographs of Netley Hospital, Southampton, including two that may have been taken inside; there is also a photo letter showing local views, including the hospital and pier. I know he liked to take photos and he has written on the back of one picture, but unfortunately no dates are given. I know that there was a new section at the hospital to deal with psychological problems, so I wonder if that was why he was transferred. I would stress that this is mainly supposition, as I have yet to locate any body holding relevant records and he may have been a patient or a member of staff.

I would be grateful for any further facts that you may be able to locate, especially relating to his injuries and his discharge date.

Regards,

Richard Mann

Hi Richard,

Sadly about 60% of the World War One soldiers' Service Records were destroyed, damaged or lost completely as a result of enemy bombing in the Blitz of 1940, when the Records Office received a direct hit. Due to this event the exact number of British soldiers serving will never be known. The surviving World War One Service Records are known as the 'Burnt Records', and are officially classed in the National Archives as WO363 (WO - War Office). Due to the losses there is a 30% chance that you will be able to trace the records of a given individual.

We have searched the database of Forces War Records, and unfortunately to date we do not have any records for Christopher Mann; so far all that we have been able to find is the Medal Index Card and his British War Medal and Victory Medal Roll entry, all via the National Archives' 'Discovery' catalogue. Our team is currently transcribing the records known as MH106, our 'Hospital Admission and Discharge Registers WWI' collection, though the 1.5 million records it contains represents only 3-5% of the original files, all that survives today. Unfortunately, the 7th Canadian Hospital records don't seem to be listed within this collection. The only details we can find on the 7th Canadian Hospital are the lines of [communication](#).

You also state that Christopher was wounded; it looks like the wound wasn't too serious as he wasn't discharged or awarded the Silver War Badge, so unfortunately no luck there. To bring more bad news, there are currently no surviving records of the large military hospital which existed in England during WWI. There may be a few records for smaller units and private institutions held in local archives, and you would need to search local catalogues to find out.

Our best advice would be to contact the relevant regimental museums, as these establishments often have their own smaller archives of records and might be able to shed light on Christopher's service. You can find details of the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum [here](#), and you will also need to contact the [Army Medical Services Museum](#). If you know the town Christopher came from, you can try researching the local newspapers of that time; many of these papers posted news from the Front, along with letters, details of gallantry awards and those wounded or killed from the area and other useful details.

Finally, you state that he returned to his duties in 1923, so it is possible that his post-1921 Service Records are still held by the MOD. Details of how to apply for these can be found [here](#).

Kind regards,

Neil White



Two men of the RAMC carrying a soldier wounded during the Battle of the Ancre

Dear Forces War Records,

I am inquiring about the war records of my uncle, Kenneth P. Campbell, who died on his first flight on 16th July 1941 and is buried in the war cemetery of Jonckersbosch (sic) in Nijmegen, the Netherlands.

I would be happy if you could help me.

Kind regards,

Kenneth Buchholtz

Hi Kenneth,

Forces War Records' expert transcribers have added the records of 'Bomber/ Fighter Command Losses 1939/45' to our site. Each record is likely to include the name, rank, Service Number, awards, flying service, detailed aircraft information, location, fate and location of burial and/or commemoration of the person referred to. Please be aware that, due to the way we collate and cross reference our databases, some records will contain more information than that listed above.

First Name:	K P
Surname:	Campbell
Nationality:	British
Fate:	Killed
Incident Details:	Crashed near Nederweert, Holland
Incident Date:	15-16/07/1941
Incident Time:	23:01
Rank:	Sergeant
Duty Location:	Duisburg
Service:	Royal Air Force
Station:	RAF Marham
Squadron:	115 Squadron
Command:	Bomber Command
Aircraft Mark:	IC
Aircraft Code:	KO-H
Aircraft Type:	Wellington
Aircraft Serial:	R1222
Commemorated:	Jonkerbos War Cemetery

Further details regarding the loss of the aircraft can be found in the wonderful books by W.R. Chorley, entitled 'Royal Air Force Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War'. In the volume for 1941 you will find a list of the following crew, who sadly all lost their lives on the 15-16th July of that year: F/S N C Cook, Sgt R Palmer, Sgt W J H Hartry RCAF, Sgt W T McDonald and Sgt F Fullard. Wellington IC R1222 KO-H was on operations in Duisburg on the night in question. It took off at 23:01 from Marham, and was shot down by a German ace in a night fighter ([Hptm Werner Streib, I./NJG1](#), who is officially credited with shooting down 66 aircraft). The plane crashed at 01:45 near Nederweert (Limburg), 4 km NE of Weert, Holland. All of the aforementioned crew members are buried in Jonkerbos War Cemetery at Nijmegen.

As the record is post 1921, you will need to contact the MOD to obtain Sergeant Campbell's Service Record; details of how to do so can be found [here](#).

I hope that this information has helped you with your search.

Regards,

Neil White



Vickers Wellington long-range bombers in flight

DO YOU NEED HELP WITH YOUR RESEARCH?

Forces War Records' Customer Support team and free forum are here to help, OR you can send your enquiry to our magazine (titled 'Ask') for your chance to receive one month's full subscription to the site:

magazine@forces-war-records.co.uk

MEET THE EXPERT...

Military-Historical Researcher Roger Nixon talks about military research

You are an experienced researcher, but what made you first begin to research your family history?

Firstly, let me say thank you for inviting me on to this page. However, I never like calling myself an expert because there is always something more to find out and know. Family lore and overheard stories were the stuff of my childhood and my curiosity was spiked at an early age. My initial business venture as a genealogist was founded on 20 years of personal research, and many military researchers hail from that quarter, whilst others enter the arena from medal collecting. It was when I discovered the military records at the National Archives of my great grandfather and a great uncle, who both served in South Africa and Egypt, that I was hooked. Since then I have handled somewhere around 8,000 commissions covering every conceivable aspect of military and naval history. I retired from full time researching in 2014, but the itch doesn't go away completely.

You specialised in military genealogy. What difficulties are commonly encountered when researching a Forces ancestor?

Most civilians are easy to locate nowadays, at least from 1841 up to 1911. They can be found enumerated in census records. Once a man enlisted in the army or navy he might still be found in a census, unless he is abroad. Until the publication of the 1861 Worldwide Army Index in 2011 there was no quick or easy way to find an enlisted man who was out of the country. Now there is also an 1871 edition. Editions for 1841 and 1851 are in view. Remembering that a soldier

might have served for up to 20-25 years means that a man's time can be tracked over a long period. Finding a seaman in the 1800s was also problematic until the National Archives published an extensive index 1853-1924, but this won't immediately indicate his whereabouts. One will have to look for the record, find his vessel and then consult its log. There is still the problem of finding serving men with the same name, regiment or birthplace, and soldiers who can be seen to have served for over 20 years but whose papers have not survived. Pension records might offer a lifeline, but not all men went to pension, so a man may be mustered year in and year out and his age and birthplace may still never be revealed. It remains for the historian to cast the net wider using a mixture of records.

What preparations should be made before starting the research journey?

Daft as it may seem, I would suggest beginning with a decent A4 ruled hardback book and a few sharp pencils! Never use pens. Be prepared to see lots of details and make notes for later review. It's a hard lesson, but methodical note-keeping is paramount. Usually there is a family story, a medal, an old certificate or some other artefact that suggests earlier military service. So, begin looking around whatever it is and work from there. If there are no clues, it will be a case of diving into a database and matching what one sees with what one knows. Elimination is as important as discovery. More broadly, one has to decide what records will have to be consulted. This might pose problems for a newcomer, so it could be necessary to ask

the archivists at the National Archives or other repositories for guidance. The alternative is to employ an experienced military researcher.

War Office muster rolls and pay lists are something of a specialty of yours. What information do they hold?

Searching hundreds of volumes to produce research or assemble an index really opens up soldiers' lives. Of all army records, the most prolific materials containing names are muster rolls and pay lists. They run from the 1600s up to around 1900, depending on the regiment. There is an old saying that good records follow money, and that is what these records are about. Every penny was accounted for, and when a soldier died the money stopped before anything else! Virtually none have been indexed, as it is not feasible or terribly productive to do so. They are incredibly useful up to 1830 for following the movements of soldiers, but offer little else, although the birthplaces and trades of soldiers with identical names are often written in the margins after 1800. After 1830, the pay lists begin to show a separate list of men being discharged in every quarter, and in these are shown his former occupation and birthplace, together with original enlistment date, place and reason for discharge. These discharge details are included up to about 1877/8, after which the pay lists finish and give way to musters, which are less revealing and often only show the first initial of other ranks. Otherwise, these records show the location of regiments, and sometimes places where men were detached, whether they were sick, on leave, deserted, transferred, discharged and so on.

LIEUT. GENERAL, S.M.C.

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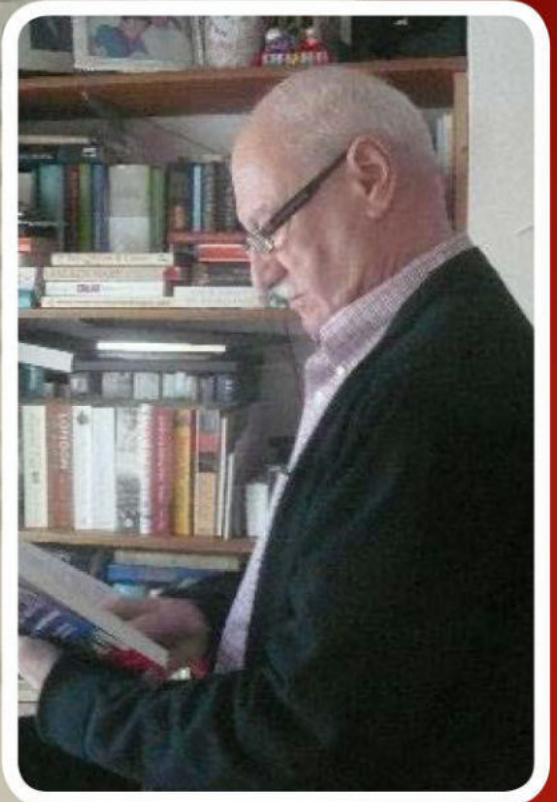
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My dear Darling,

I am very glad you have the chance to share your distinguished record the more intimate of this. I command a regiment, the 21st Infantry, ^{based} ^{and} with the greatest

on the road and

It is tragic to think that the regional authorities have just the resources that the hell with us suggests. The way will include more than a few chapters.



MEET THE EXPERT...

Many people feel daunted by pre WW1 records. What books or resources would you recommend consulting to learn about them?

Post 1900 material harbours records produced in a well administered era, and includes largely well indexed census material, absent voter records, electoral rolls and so on; the 1939 National Register has just been added into the Findmypast collection. But, these days, no one should feel daunted by pre 1900 history. Step back and consider where to start. Archives, record offices and museums now abound, and are usually staffed by dedicated and helpful experts. Also close to hand are superb research guides. The Society of Genealogists has published an excellent guide, entitled 'My Ancestor was in... The British Army', by Michael and Christopher Watts; 300 pages, packed with really helpful details.

The National Archives has numerous research guides, which can be accessed via their website at: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides. The National Archives catalogue, which is now called 'Discovery', is also helpful, but it may take a little time to learn how to use it effectively. The National Archives also published a superb book, entitled 'Tracing your Ancestors in the National Archives', by Amanda Bevan. It's now out of print, but it is worth buying second hand, and it will not date. There are also numerous regimental museums (139 in all) that can offer assistance – a donation is suggested. A full list can be accessed via www.armymuseums.org.uk.

As a pro-researcher you must know what people struggle with when trying to construct a family tree. Can you offer any solutions?

I have been an ordinary family historian, and I have got stuck, too, and still do. It is important

to start with the right mind-set. Before starting with a family tree program, either bought or online, just begin with a sheet of white paper and a pencil and create a very rough tree, based on what is known. Make a list of what is not known, but necessary for the tree. Then set about finding answers to those questions step by step. The tree will gradually take on a more significant and well researched shape. Always work backwards and not forwards. Always use primary source material, and never rely on secondary sources. Family lore can be helpful but is often incorrect. Prove it or disprove it!

Never make assumptions, always seek to prove. Censuses are incredibly helpful. Most ancestors will appear at some point. The earliest is 1841, and many subjects listed will have been born as early as 1760, so anyone might get off to a good start. However, it will remain to also search earlier parish records, which were replaced by civil registration in the September quarter of 1837. Finding aids are numerous, but entries will require substantiation. Wills – immensely valuable – are now online from the very earliest times, and obituaries should not be overlooked. Lastly, the internet has changed everything. There are now dozens of genealogical forums, and many published histories and stories, but everything must be scrutinised. And don't forget that notebook!

In your years of researching, what has been the most exciting or revealing project you've worked on?

I had one client whose grandmother was an enigma. She used an alias. Her age was unclear. The research started in Britain, involving Chinese and American researchers as well as an Irish clairvoyant, and moved to Shanghai, then came back through the USA and Canada to Britain. Eventually an address on an incoming passenger list led to

a family link and her real name. She was five years older than she claimed, and she had had two children, whom she had deserted, before bigamously remarrying. Her second family knew nothing of the first union. Exciting finale, but very sad in parts. The story, with attendant research, was filmed in a BBC TV4 series, 'Family Ties – Mother of Pearl', televised in November 2004.

I also spent a year researching the 15 inch guns of Singapore, positioned to target enemy vessels coming into the Singapore Strait and accurate at a range of 20 miles. In the event the Japanese invaded Singapore overland from the north, whereas the guns had been positioned to fire seawards. Popular legend had it that they could only point one way. Research revealed that the Johore battery had a maximum arc of fire of 340 degrees whilst that at Buona Vista battery was limited to 320 degrees. It was also confirmed that one of the batteries – Johore – did fire in anger on the mainland. The arsenal for these guns consisted of 200 rounds, but all but one shell was armour piercing. They were not suitable for land bombardment but were still used to great effect. The Japanese force moved through the areas the guns could not target. Had the guns had a full traverse and been equipped with explosive rounds, it is possible that Singapore might not have fallen. The story was published in 'Did Singapore Have To Fall' by Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn.

Any other business?

One is never finished in family research. Never give up.



Click here if you've enjoyed reading this article

Coastal defence gun at
Singapore, Jahore Battery,
[Wikimedia Commons](#)



WHAT'S ON GUIDE

Genealogy events, lectures, museum days, military history events and exhibitions



THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AND ITS ALLIES WILL DESTROY THE NAZI TYRANNY

Empire & Commonwealth: London Libraries Tour

**Maida Vale Library, Sutherland
Ave, London W9 2QT**

Date: Mon 1st Feb – Sun 14th Feb

Since over 3 million people from more than 60 different countries served alongside British troops during the First World War, the National Army Museum will be taking an Empire and Commonwealth exhibition on the road to a range of libraries around London. This tour will explore images and stories about the vital role these soldiers played in the British war effort.
([See here for more](#))

Art Gallery Tour: Peter Kennard, unofficial War Artist

Imperial War Museum, London

**Date: Sat 6th Feb, 11am, 1pm and
3pm - Free**

The free hour-long tour at the Imperial War Museum with Peter Kennard (unofficial War Artist) will highlight some key pieces

within the exhibition of his work charting a 50 year career and features over 200 artworks and related items, including a new art installation.
([See here for more](#))

The South of England Militaria Arms & Armour Fair

**The Historic Dockyard, Church
Lane, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TE**

**Date: Sun 14th Feb, 7am to 2pm
– Public Entry £4.00**

This is the No.1 regular monthly Militaria Arms and Armour Fair in the South of England. At this fair you will see a wonderful display of medals, uniforms, badges, weapons, helmets and so much more, all for sale. It's a great chance to see what your military ancestor would have been issued or awarded during times of conflict. Vehicles and re-enactment groups can also be seen attending this military fair.
([See here for more](#))

The Military Fashion of British Army Uniforms through the 19th Century

**Army & Navy Club, 36-39 Pall
Mall, London SW1Y 5JN**

**Date: Mon 8th Feb,
12.30pm - Free**

Speaker Jennifer Daley will analyse the military spectacle of British battlefield dress in 19th century British warfare, with particular focus on gold braid, in response to political, economic and technological developments, and within the wider framework of British warfare.
([See here for more](#))

The 20th Century is Now History Seminar

**Colonel Dane Memorial Hall,
Church Street, Alwalton PE7 3UU**

**Date: Sat 13th Feb, 9.30am to
4.45pm**

A programme of lectures looking at the records of the 20th century that may be utilised in a one-name study. Topics to be

explored by specialist speakers will include '20th Century Archives - Their Potential and Problems', 'School Records and Electoral Rolls', 'Adoption and Divorce' and 'Writing up your one-name Study'.

[\(See here for more\)](#)



Heraldry

79-82 Northgate, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1BA

Date: Sat 20th Feb, 10.15am to 4.30pm - £45.00, or £40.00 for IHGS Members

The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies heraldry course aims to show that the records of heraldry can be of great use to family historians; it is suitable for absolute beginners and those with some experience. Practical guidance will be given on how to understand heraldry and how to identify coats of arms.

[\(See here for more\)](#)

The Martial Races of India: Recruitment by Ethnicity in the British Indian Army

Army & Navy Club, 36-39 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5JN

Date: Mon 22nd Feb, 12.30pm - Free

Project Officer Jasdeep Singh Rahal will be using content from the National Army Museum's Indian Army collection to examine how certain races in India were identified, studied and groomed to form regiments in the British Indian Army.

[\(See here for more\)](#)



Digging the Trenches: the Archaeology of the Western Front - Andy Robertshaw

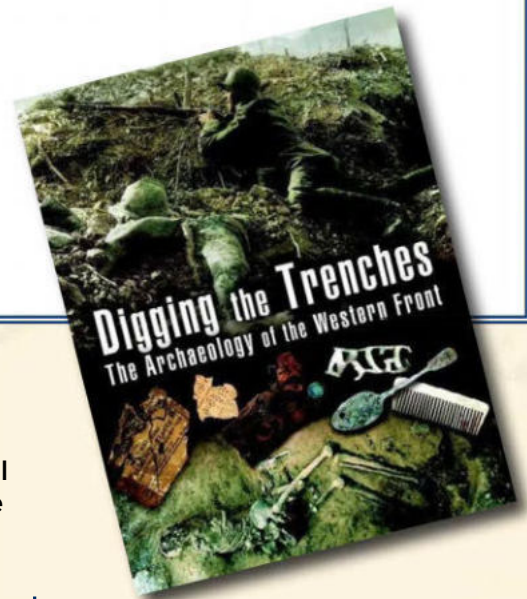
Hosted by the Army & Navy Club, 36-39 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5JN

Date: Thursday 25th Feb 19:00

Andy Robertshaw is a historian and broadcaster who is a regular consultant and on-screen expert for a number of TV and radio shows, including 'Time Team', 'The Trench Detectives' and 'Who Do You Think You Are?' He was also lead historical consultant for Steven Spielberg's film adaptation of 'War Horse', which he also appeared in. Andy is currently filming a new documentary on the Somme.

[\(See here for more\)](#)

**NATIONAL
ARMY
MUSEUM**



Nautical Chic

National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO1 3NH

Date: Thur 25th Feb, 18:30 to 21:00 - Cost £10 per person and must be booked in advance

Join fashion historian Amber Jane Butchart for a talk on her new book, 'Nautical Chic', which traces the relationship between maritime dress and the fashionable wardrobe, uncovering stories, tracking the trends, and tracing the evolution of the style back to its roots in our seafaring past. Find out about the origins of naval uniform and why it continues to provide perennial inspiration for the fashion world. There will also be a chance to preview rare uniforms from the museum collection.

[\(See here for more\)](#)

Empire & Commonwealth: London Libraries Tour

Carnegie Library, 188 Herne Hill Rd, London SE24 0AG

Date: Mon 29th Feb - Sunday 13th March

A second chance to see the National Army Museum's Empire and Commonwealth exhibition, exploring images and stories about the vital role these soldiers played in the British war effort.

[\(See here for more\)](#)

If you have an event or family history fair that you would like Forces War Records Magazine to publicise, please e-mail the staff at:

magazine@forces-war-records.co.uk.

100 YEARS AGO

On this day... remembering the Great War

- General Smith-Dorrien, commanding in East Africa, reports good progress being made with the branch railway from Voi. It has been pushed onto the site of an enemy camp west of Mbuyuni.



- Russia reports that her advance in the Caucasus continues successfully.
- Heavy hostile shelling continues against our trenches around Loos.

A 21cm siege mortar gun with caterpillar wheels, as used by the German Army

- It is reported from British Headquarters in France that there have been twenty-eight combats in the air. In five cases the German machines were driven down to their lines and a sixth was forced to descend with a stopped engine.

- Fire breaks out on board H.M. boarding steamer *Peel Castle* in the Strait of Dover; no loss of life reported.
- Renewed fighting takes place on the Bukovina frontier. From Russian reports it appears that the fighting was desperate, our ally doing great execution with the bayonet. The enemy's casualties in one engagement were 2,000 killed.
- A communiqué regarding operations in Mesopotamia states that General Townshend is holding Kut-al-Amara as a point of strategical value.

- **Air Raid in Kent.** Two enemy seaplanes fly over Margate and Ramsgate in the afternoon, causing few casualties and slight damage.
- It is officially reported that in Galicia the Russians have driven the enemy back to the west of the Dniester River, capturing Uscieczko, and establishing themselves on the west bank.

General Smith-Dorrien

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- It is announced that British liner *Appam* has been captured by German armed liner *Moewe*, and taken, with prize crew aboard, to the American port of Norfolk.

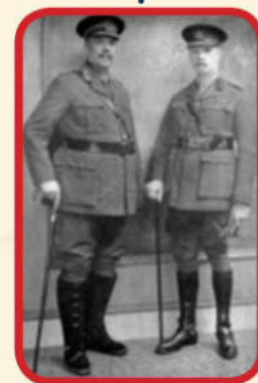
- In Belgium the French Artillery, in co-operation with the British, execute a destructive fire on German trenches facing Boesinghe.
- **Minor naval action in the Adriatic.** A British cruiser and a French torpedo-boat, covering the retirement of the Serbian Army, meet four enemy destroyers and fire upon them. The latter flee towards Cattaro.

- **Loss of a Zeppelin.** Germany admits that one of the Zeppelins that took part in a raid on the Midland Counties, Jan 31st, has been wrecked in the North Sea.
- Allied columns in the Cameroon are closing in on the remnants of the German force, with many of the enemy retiring over the frontier of Spanish Guinea.

Artist's illustration of the wrecked L 19; published in 'Flight'



Botha and Smuts in uniform, 1917



- **General Smuts to Command in East Africa.** It is announced that General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien has resigned owing to ill-health, and that General Smuts has succeeded him, with the rank of Temporary Lieutenant-General.
- Germany sends a note to the United States as to the arming of merchantmen of the Allies.

- A German long-range gun fires three shells into BeHort.
- French armoured cruiser *Admiral Charner* is torpedoed by an enemy submarine and sinks. Most of the crew of 375 is lost.

What happened on your birthday, or if your ancestor died on this day 100 years ago...

- The French announce that south of the Somme, in the course of separate actions carried out on the 8th and 9th, they retook a considerable part of the trench elements which had remained in the enemy's hands in the region to the south of Frise.
- It is announced that hostile Arabs attacked a British reconnaissance force on its return to Nasiriych from an upper branch of the Tigris named Shat-el-Hai. Our total casualties numbered 373. A small punitive column was later despatched from Nasiriych, surprised the Arabs, and destroyed four of their villages.

- In Artois the Germans launch a series of attacks from Hill 140 to the road from Neuville to La Folie. In the course of the fourth attack the enemy penetrates into the French first-line trench to the west of Hill 140, but is driven out by an immediate counter-attack.
- After a violent bombardment the Germans storm 200 yards of trench east of Seppois, in Alsace. Most of the lost ground is retaken by the French.

- Russians storm and carry another of the Erzurum forts. Thirteen French aeroplanes drop 150 bombs on Strumnitza.



- **Conquest of the Cameroon.** The War Office announces that operations have now practically ended, and the conquest of the Cameroon is complete, with the exception of the isolated position of Mora Hill (in the extreme north). It is later announced that General Dobell, commander of British forces, has reported that the Germans have ceased their resistance.

Last scene at Mora Hill as Captain von Raden surrenders to British officers in charge

- The Colonial Office announces a telegram from the Governor General of Nigeria saying that the German garrison at Mora has capitulated.

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

- **Fall of Erzurum.** It is reported that the Austrians and Bulgarians are advancing on Durazzo.



A tug alongside the wreck of *Arethusa*, after it is badly damaged by a mine off Felixstowe

- The Admiralty announces that H.M.S. *Arethusa* has struck a mine off the East Coast, and it is feared that she will become a total wreck. About 10 men lose their lives.
- **New Ypres Battle.** Between the Ypres-Comines Canal and the Ypres-Comines railway, Germans capture 600 yards of the "International trench".
- Five hostile air raids take place in Italy. Eight people are killed in Milan by enemy bombs.

- Four German seaplanes drop 17 bombs on Lowestoft, and six on Walmer. Two men and a boy are killed in the latter town.
- There is a successful night air raid by British airmen against Cambrai aerodrome.

- General Smuts reports that an enemy force attacked the post of Kachumbe, on the Ugandan border, but was driven off.



General Smuts in command of the Imperial forces against German East Africa making observations from his armoured car

- Reconnaissance is carried out within the north-east boundary of German East Africa against the main force of Germans at Salaita Hill, with a loss to our troops of 172 men. The 2nd South African Brigade is engaged.
- **Forward Move at Salonika.** It is announced that French troops have crossed the Vardar and installed themselves on the right bank of the river in the region of Yenitso (Janitza) and at Verria.



A typical WW1 motor-gun carriage



For the glory of France at Douaumont

- A Zeppelin is brought down in French Lorraine by a French motor-gun section.
- **Opening of Great Verdun Battle.** The Front stretches from Brabant-sur-Meuse to Herbebois. Haumont Wood and the Beaumont salient are captured by Germans. Attacks against Brabant and Herbebois are repulsed.

- **Third day.** The Front stretches from Brabant to south of Ornes. The French evacuate Brabant, and repulse an attack against Samogneux. Part of the recaptured Beaumont salient is again lost. The French withdraw from Samogneux and Ornes. A French air raid targets the Metz-Sablon railway, one of the lines of communication for present operations.

- **Fifth day.** Several German attacks against the new French positions are repulsed.
- New Post for Lord Derby. It is announced that he is to be the chairman of a joint Naval and Military Air Defence Committee.

- **Verdun Battle.** The French rally beyond Fort Douaumont, and closely encircle the fractions of the German force that survived the terrible artillery fire directed on the ruined fort.
- P & O Liner *Maloja* sinks off Dover; and is said to have been torpedoed. One hundred and fifty-five persons are missing.

- It is reported that General Aylmer's column on the Tigris has moved up three miles nearer to Kut.
- To the north of Verdun the French maintain their Front. Violent hand-to-hand encounters occur about Douaumont, and a fierce struggle begins for Manheulles, ten miles east-south-east of Verdun. The enemy takes the village, and the French by counterattack regain its western end.

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29

General Petain the heroric defender of Verdun looks across the fateful field



- **Second day.** The Front stretches from Brabant to Ornes. Haumont village is evacuated. Part of the Beaumont salient is recaptured. A strong enemy attack on Herbebois stops an Artillery bombardment on a 25-mile Front from Malancourt (west of the Meuse) to near Etain.

- **Verdun Battle.** The Germans capture Fort Douaumont, a dismantled fort without either guns or a garrison in the outer line of defences to the north-east of Verdun, but the French report its encirclement.
- The French take an important position from the enemy at Sainte-Marie-à-Py, in Champagne.

- **Fourth day.** There are no German attacks during the night. The French establish themselves on the line of heights stretching from the east of Champneuville to the south of Ornes. The Germans claim the capture of Champneuville, Beaumont, Ornes, and the French positions up to the ridge of Lauvemont, as well as over 10,000 prisoners.

- It is announced that the South Africans and Territorials have routed the Arabs in Western Egypt.
- **Verdun Battle continued.** To the north the activity of the opposing artilleries is still very great. To the west of Fort Douaumont the French troops engage in hand-to-hand fighting with the enemy, and drive him from a small redoubt in which he had established himself.
- In Champagne, in the region of the Navarin Farm, north of Souain, the Germans capture the French position.



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Sourced from 'The War Illustrated Album De Luxe' from the Forces War Records Historic Documents Archive. Published between 1915-20 and drawn from contemporary sources by Sir John Alexander Hammerton, the 'Diary of Events' entries provide a fascinating picture of the war as it was viewed at the time.

ARCHIVE EXTRACT...

Philip Parkinson - fighting the Japanese

A fascinating extract from our Historic Documents Archive, continued from Issue 10, the January Special Edition 2016, submitted by John Parkinson.



Major General Orde Wingate

Alongside the Chindits into Burma

Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) was still in danger of attack by Japanese bombers, or even invasion, so two weeks later and with much regret it was off again. This time Bombay, and the Indian Army troop ship left a lot to be desired, coal burning and as hot as hell. On arrival they were met by buses with blacked out windows, so the locals did not see a defeated British Army. Going from Bombay by train up-country to the highlands at the foot of the Himalayas, they were treated to stunning views. It is the best tea planting region in the world, and the temperature is just like England at the height of summer. Staying in the grounds of a hotel was much better than reporting back to the regiment, and after a few weeks things were looking up and they got some back pay and some leave.

Jack Twiss and Dad decided it was time to go visit Auntie Pat. A long train journey later and they were in Madras, a massive city teeming with millions of Indians. With not an English speaker to be found, they looked for the British Embassy. After hours of searching, there it was, sticking out like sore thumb, all British in teeming Madras. Lots of questions followed: "Where have you been, how did you get here, my God you have been though all that, come upstairs and have a cup of tea and tell us about Singapore, do you think they will come here?"

After what seemed an age they were able to ask where the Presentation Convent School was, and were told to come over to the window, as it was over road just two blocks down. Dad asked for Patricia Loughran and nobody had heard of her. He said she was new and young, and they said, "Oh, you mean Sister Christine, the new sister, they change their names on becoming a nun." Soon she arrived, saying she could only stay half an hour. That was about 50 miles a minute! Dad had never met her before, so it took half an hour just to explain who he was and how he had got there, then it was goodbye and off they went. "Come back again," Sister Christine said, "in a couple of days, and I'll get more time to speak."

Dad had noticed that her shoes were in bad state, so with money in his pocket it was off to the shop for shoes and anything else they could find. Can you imagine, two 21 year olds in foreign country, money in their pockets, sand, sea and a lot to see? Two days gone, and it was back to the

convent for afternoon tea. Auntie Pat is 97 and still remembers that day, new shoes and a few little extras. She had sent a letter to my mum, but it took four months to get back to Barrow. By the time it arrived Mum had got over the loss of Phil (John's dad, Philip Parkinson) by going out with a new man... it was a big shock, no doubt, to hear he was back to life after six months! She did not know if she was coming or going, but that was war.

In the meantime, it was back up-country with a bad case of dysentery for Dad, and after a short stay in hospital he reported to a new unit in the Fourteenth Army of India. I don't know how long Dad was there, but he retrained on tanks and Bren Carriers. The Chindits were going into Burma with Major-General Orde Wingate, a man famous for his radical tactics, rebellious attitude and eccentricity. His Chindits were equipped with bicycles, asses, donkeys and loads of guts, with half of the brigade being made up of Ghurkhas, fighters from Nepal who had been fighting for the British for well over a century. All the running away had to stop, and the lads were up for it.

Wingate's attack was to be on three fronts. Things went well, and they nearly got to Mandalay and Rangoon, but the Japanese put up a stiff fight and stopped them. The Japanese then counter attacked, so they needed back up. Here came Phil to the rescue in his Bren Carrier, along with a load of M3 General Lee tanks and a full regiment of men. The Ngakydauk Pass is the border with India and Burma, so over they went, only to find roads so narrow it was near impossible to drive a tank over them, or even the much smaller Bren Carrier for that matter. Both being tracked vehicles, they are quite difficult to control in tight, slow manoeuvres

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as you can only turn by braking one track or the other, a far less precise system than the wheels of your car. Can you imagine driving one of these vehicle up a winding road with a gradient of one in three, and hairpin bends every 200 yards or so? It was slow and very dangerous; if he had pulled the steering lever too hard, he would have been over the side of the cliff.

On the way up there was a check point on the pass, and as Dad drove his Bren Carrier past it he was told to stop and one of the sentries said, "Nay damn, Parky, thou's dead, it's in the 'Carnforth News'!" Dad laughed and said, "That's another thing they have got wrong, Tony!" Tony Dixon was two years older than Dad, and had had a letter from his wife, saying that Dad was missing, believed killed, after the taking of Singapore. This started a lifelong question... was Dad a hero, or was he AWOL, absent without leave? Dad's answer was always that he was asked to volunteer for a secret mission (see part 1)!

After a week the whole regiment was over into Burma, all jungle and malaria, tough country to live in, let alone wage war in. The High Command had intelligence that the Japanese Army had bypassed what was left of the Chindits, and was heading for Arakan at full speed. This caused a panic because men were going down with malaria, so it was decided the best thing was to try retreating back over the pass. With not enough time to retreat in safety, the only thing they could do was to form a square using all the tanks. The idea was to dig in and part bury the tanks with just the turrets showing, which meant a small target for anti-tank guns. Digging was easy in the soft ground, so it was trenches and tanks; this was enough to hold the first attack! The Japanese had never seen the British army fight like this before.

With nowhere to go, the soldiers had all heard of the way prisoners were treated by the Japanese;

it was fight to the death. The Japanese attack came at first light, and Dad was in his Bren Carrier in a forward position. "Wait here, Corporal Parkinson. When you can hear them coming, send up a flare in their direction, give them a long burst of Bren, and get yourself back into the box," said the Sergeant. A long burst of Bren meant full clip, about 50 rounds of deadly .303inch (7.7mm) calibre bullets. If you got in the way of this, it could cut you in two.

When the Japanese appeared, Dad sent a phosphorus flare in their direction. It became like daylight above the whole Japanese position, so it was a case of picking a target and sending a long burst. The bullets struck in a line, catching the unsuspecting Japanese 200 yards away. The dash back to the box was at full speed, since they had removed the air filter and part of the silencer to give the Bren Carrier extra swiftness. After the first attack the Japanese thought twice before they charged a British Army position armed with Vickers machine guns, Bren guns and tanks with their turret gun, plus extra machine guns. They now knew what it meant to fight to the death. Japanese dead littered the ground around the box; this was the start of the Battle of Admin Box.

The first attack was full-on from the front, Japanese light tanks and small field guns against the heavy British tanks and larger anti-tank guns; the charge was stopped by a well dug in unit that was going nowhere. With heavy casualties, the Japanese retreated out of range of the bigger guns, and once out of range things slowed down, with both armies watching each other.

The British were then surrounded, with the Japanese covering the Ngakydauk Pass, which stopped them from being reinforced or resupplied from India. The Japanese thought they had the upper hand and would be able to wait for starvation to set in. What the Japanese didn't realise was that, in their haste to bypass the Chindits, they had left their own supply chain open to assault from behind, a classic mistake. Now neither army could get resupplied. General Slim had the idea of getting the RAF to



resupply from the air, and every morning there would be an air drop of supplies from low-flying aircraft. Mostly they missed the target, and it was up to the troops to take turns at going into No Man's Land to fight hand-to-hand with the equally hungry Japanese troops.

Dad would go out in his Bren Carrier to find the lost parachutes with supplies attached. They were in big metal cylinders, and one day he retrieved a cylinder that had broken open. It was

filled with tinned peaches, and one can just fell behind the driver's seat, to be retrieved later. One of the other drivers had a tin of condensed milk; Dad always said that was the best meal he ever had!

Weeks went on, and the Japanese tried to get their big guns, which had been captured at Singapore, onto the top of the hill overlooking the British camp. Along with a group of 60 plus men, Dad had to attack the Japanese as they dug in and positioned their guns. The British

ever heard, then there they were with splits in the barrels. This was just one of the regular hand-to-hand fights. Nights were always the favourite, with night patrols from both sides often stumbling across each other in No Man's Land.

In his memoirs, General Slim said that this was the greatest battle against the Japanese in World War Two. The end of the battle came one morning when the Japanese turned away, heading south as fast as they could, with the British Army in pursuit. The casualties on both sides were heavy, but the Japanese losses were not as heavy as those of the British, who had been under fire in a confined space.

The battle left many with malaria, Dad included, so instead of chasing the Japs it was back to India and hospital. It took weeks to recuperate, but instead of the usual AB malaria, which leaves you suffering flu-like symptoms for the rest of your life, it was cerebral malaria that Dad got. He was in hospital for many weeks, but although this type of malaria can kill, you never suffer any more symptoms.

One day he had a visit from Nathan Dixon from Carnforth, the brother

of Tony Dixon whom he had gone to school with. He thought he was coming to see Dad before he died, but when he met him, Dad was sitting up in bed. After talking to Nathan for a time, Dad said, "By gum, Nathan, thou looks terrible." Nathan said he could not eat the local food, and had no money to buy food. All his pay went straight back to his wife and child. Dad said, "Pass me my wallet." He opened it and gave half of the contents to Nathan, telling him to go and buy himself a good meal. Years later,

at Cartmel Races, I witnessed the reunion with Nathan. This time he was paying, it was ice creams all round for us six kids. Dad had a saying about never lending money: if you can afford to, give it, but never lend a penny if you want it back - the secret to a happy life.

Back with his mates in Burma, Dad found that monsoon season had arrived. It would rain for weeks on end. Tanks hated monsoons, they were soon bogged down in the mud, the only thing to do was to sit it out; just down the road was the Japanese Army, waiting for the rain to stop. Wingate's Chindits could move in any weather, they gave the Japs hell. With the monsoon over, it was on the move again. Dad had been in Burma six months, and it was time for leave. The men were taken by truck back over the Ngakydauk Pass, back to India and straight back into hospital with a case on dysentery. However, good food and clean water soon sorted them out. With the war in Burma going well, it was back to Bombay with Dad for a top secret project.

READ MORE OF PHILIP PARKINSON'S STORY IN OUR [Historic Documents Archive](#).

Dad, Jack Twiss and Jim Sturgeon, 3 of the 8 who joined the Australian captain in an open boat

attacked just after dark, catching them off guard. It was a rout and the Japanese retreated, leaving the guns behind. With the guns secured, it was expected that the Japanese would counter attack, but getting back to safety was impossible with the guns in tow. The order came that they had to wreck the guns. Packing them with mud and firing them was the way to do it! When ready, it was an extra-long lanyard and fingers in your ears as the officer in charge pulled on the lanyard. "Boom", the biggest boom Dad



An M3 General Lee in Burma

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